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EVERY MAN'S BOOK

EVERY MAN'S BOOK

by

FRANCIS CARR STIFLER



Published by

EVERY MAN'S BOOK

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FIRST EDITION

K-Q

Dedicated to my Wife

JEAN LUCCOCK STIFLER

whose daily reading and living
of the Bible has been a continuous
inspiration through the years

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FOREWORD

When I told a friend recently I thought we ought to discipline ourselves to take an occasional upward look during these ghastly days, his ironic answer was, "And see what?" I knew he would call it sentimental and unreal if I answered, "Look into the face of God," so I said, "Look at the Bible."

"What do you mean—look at the Bible?" he came back. Here was my chance. I plunged in and told him some of the things I have put down in this book. Simple as they were, they impressed him and I was encouraged.

Much of this material, through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company and the Department of National Religious Radio, has been given during the past three years on one of the national networks. The response from the listeners has further encouraged me.

I was glad to discover in the findings of the Readability Laboratory sponsored by the American Association of Adult Education that all sorts of people like to read simple, informative nonfiction books. This still further encouraged me for what I have written is not fiction and is desperately simple. But it is on a grand theme. Let some scholar give it to us in full orchestra with variations and "footnotes." This book is a simple, one-finger exercise. It states that there is no institution in the world of letters that faintly compares with the Bible. The Bible has outdistanced every other book in moving from language to language. Wherever it has gone, it has captured the hearts of men so that they call it their own, be they civilized or savage, learned or unlettered. It has permeated and lifted the social life of peoples wherever they have welcomed it. Though an ancient book, of Hebrew origin, written at first in languages now dead, and known to most of us in the English of four centuries ago, it is

FOREWORD

still the liveliest thing in literature. Already available in more than one thousand tongues, a year from when I write these lines it will have found printed expression—some part of it—in a dozen languages of peoples who today have no published Scriptures in their tongue.

War crushes many things. It only seems to make this book more popular, in China, in Germany, in Japan, in Finland, in the Balkan states. The Bible is potentially what our title calls it “Every Man’s Book.” When these wars are over it will still be here, speaking in the languages of the hearts and homes of nine tenths of the people of the world. It will heal and bind as it has before.

The fact of the Bible is worth looking up at in these dark hours. For most who do it, the experience will not be wholly an objective one. For God speaks in this Book, and God dwells within.

SERIES I

The Light Shines in the Darkness

Chapter 1

A THOUSAND-CANDLE POWER



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

This majestic announcement was made over nineteen hundred years ago. Let me quote the last verse from one of the modern English translations:

The light is still shining in the darkness; for the darkness has never put it out.

The way this divine affirmation has been substantiated is the theme for our first series of talks.

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is the second chapter of Acts, which tells how the Christian movement began in the world. If you are going to have movement, you must have some power. The patient disciples had waited after the ascension of Christ till they should be visited with power from on high. On the day of Pentecost it came, and, before the day was over, three thousand persons were won to Christ, and the Christian church had been born.

This experience on the day of Pentecost, like the great moments in the life and ministry of Jesus had a remarkable miraculous accompaniment. But it was unlike any of the miracles that signalized the earlier events. There were no angelic voices, no opening skies, no storms that rent the rocks and tore the veil of

the temple in two. This time there were tongues like as of fire, that seemed to rest upon the heads of the apostles; and these simple Galileans, most of whom were unlettered men of toil, began to speak concerning Christ and his power to save, in the native languages of the great crowd of pilgrims that had gathered from the four quarters of the Roman Empire to attend the feast. Then the record says:

And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

Well, what did it mean? May I tell you what I think it meant? I think that God chose this particular marvelous accompaniment to the impartation of His power to the newborn church, because He knew that the gospel could only transform the human heart when a man heard it in his own tongue.

There is something about one's native speech that is of the very warp and woof of a man's inner being. A friend of mine, who has written a book on this subject, has most aptly called the native tongue "the shrine of a people's soul."

Some years ago, when I was a pastor, a Swedish family moved into our neighborhood and began attending our services. There were three generations in the family—a young married couple with two sweet little girls, and Mrs. Roberg, the wife's elderly widowed mother. They had all been born in this country, except Mrs. Roberg. As time went on, they all brought their membership from the Swedish church a few miles away—all except Mrs. Roberg, who was the most devout Christian of them all. She preferred to retain her membership in the old church, although it was but seldom she could get to worship there. One day I pressed her to join the rest of her family in membership with us. "No," said she, "I shall continue my membership in the Swedish church. When you preach, I understand what you say. It reaches my head; but the language in which you say it does not reach my heart." There you have it. For most people there is only one language that reaches the heart.

I once told this story about Mrs. Roberg before a large group of men. At the close of the meeting a handsome gentleman came

up to me and said, "I appreciated your story of the old Swedish grandmother. May I tell you one about myself? I too was born in Sweden although I am sure you would not guess it from my accent." I never should have. His English was perfect. Then he continued, "I speak French, Spanish, Dutch, German, Italian and Polish as well as you hear me speaking English now. But when I go to my knees each night in prayer, I always talk to God in Swedish."

Here, then, is my answer to the question prompted by the marvelous gift of speech on the day of Pentecost—"What meaneth this?"—it is that God knew that the message of Christ was never going to reach the hearts of all men except through the channels of their native speech.

My conviction about this is based upon what has happened since the day of Pentecost. It is the most marvelous story in all the realm of literature—how the Bible has moved from tongue to tongue to become the book of all peoples.

When the apostles went out with their gospel, it was for the most part a gospel in Greek, which was the language of the schools in the Roman world of New Testament days. Soon, however, as they pushed farther and farther afield, it became necessary for Paul and the others to speak through interpreters. Nor was it long before the demand for the written word was coming from those who did not read Greek; and so the translating of the Scriptures from one language to another began. It is an epic tale upon which we shall touch more than once in these brief talks. Today we have time only to sketch the broad outline of the story.

The Syriac Bible appeared in the second century, and was probably the first of the great translations. In its resultant influence it is second only to the Latin Vulgate and the English Bible. Through the succeeding centuries the Syriac Bible went with the missionaries on their long journeys all over the Eastern world, as far as Ceylon and China.

Gradually, Latin began to supplant Greek as the written language of the Roman world. Translations into this language also appeared as early as the second century, and were superseded in the fifth by the completion of Jerome's great work known as

the Vulgate, which is to this day the official Bible of the Catholic Church. Whatever be the branch of the church to which we belong, we should all thank God for Jerome and his translation. It was finished just as the shadows of the Dark Ages began to gather. For centuries the church in Europe almost disappeared as an intelligent, moral force. It was the faithful students in the monasteries with their Vulgate Bibles who kept the light burning till better days should come.

Those better days began to appear in the middle of the fifteenth century. The Renaissance, though it had its pagan influences, nevertheless turned people toward the light. The invention of printing encouraged literacy, which was unbelievably low in the Europe of those days. Then, Luther, with his stirring message of justification by faith, opened up the new channels for the spread of the gospel, and a great new day for the light that no darkness can put out had arrived.

It is impossible to evaluate the place of the Bible in the life of the world since it began its triumphant march in the sixteenth century. England is hard to invade, as Hitler and many a would-be conqueror before him has discovered. But, in the sixteenth century, this book conquered England, remade her into that great devout liberty-loving, and I believe, unconquerable land she is. In the seventeenth century, England produced her King James version, which is without a rival among all the books ever given to mankind in any language. Its light has shone in every quarter of the globe, and has touched the flame of literally hundreds of other tongues to make them speak God's matchless Word.

Seventeenth century England gave the world America—a nation literally born of the Bible. England and America, by the hands of their missionaries and their Bible societies, have literally given the Bible to the world. Here is the story, briefly sketched.

During the early centuries and through the Dark Ages, the light that could not be put out moved from language to language until, with the dawn of better days and the invention of printing about five hundred years ago, the Bible, or some substantial part of it, had appeared in thirty-three languages, includ-

ing most of the principal tongues of Europe. We should pause to reflect a moment upon the fact that throughout all these centuries every copy of every Bible in every language had to be written, every word of it, by someone's hand.

The next three hundred and fifty years—till the year 1800—saw the Scriptures pass into thirty-eight more languages. Then a great new Christian era began. The nineteenth century was a century of unprecedented achievement. It gave us the railroad and the steamship, Bessemer steel, the telegraph, and the telephone. It gave us Abraham Lincoln and William Gladstone and Robert Browning and a galaxy of other first magnitude personalities in almost every realm of human achievement—but if I were asked what I thought was the most far-reaching of the many achievements of the nineteenth century I should unhesitatingly say that it was the translating of the word of God into the languages spoken by the vast majority of the men of earth.

In the modern missionary movement the doors opened for the whole world, as they had opened three hundred years earlier for Europe. Missionaries began to take the great commission seriously to preach the gospel to every creature from "Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strands." Almost everywhere they went, they faced the necessity of translating the Scriptures. The story of how these missionaries labored with strange, and often unwritten, tongues, is an epic of heroism scarcely equaled in the whole story of the race. By the year 1830 they had produced the Scriptures in eighty-six more languages—more in thirty years than in all the eighteen hundred years before. Nor was this a flash in the pan. The fiery zeal to give all men the Pentecostal joy of hearing in their own tongues the wonderful works of God has never slackened; indeed, it has accelerated. Through the nineteenth century, the Scriptures appeared in a new tongue at the rate of about five every year. So far in this high-speed twentieth century this pace has been stepped up to twelve a year. At the present moment, missionaries are working at this task in every continent. There were exactly twelve languages added in the year 1940, and the total as compiled in January, 1941, was 1,051. This figure is, of course, already out of date.

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemer's praise," wrote Charles Wesley two hundred years ago. One wonders just what the great hymn writer may have had in mind when this sentiment was born in his heart. It is never safe to try to make poetry into prose, but surely in the achievement we are recounting, Charles Wesley's prayer is answered. The light is shining in the world's darkness with a thousand-candle power. I am told that so extensively has this work of translation now been done, that nine tenths of the people of the world might today have the Pentecostal experience of hearing in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. Ah, yes, they might. But, alas, most of them have not yet had the light carried to them. This is our task. The problem of translation is well on the way to solution. Consider these facts: The whole Bible is available in 184 tongues including all the principal literary languages of mankind. The New Testament has moved into 227 more languages, and some lesser but substantial part of the Bible into 640 more tongues still. Though there is yet much to be done, the translating missionary has made notable progress. The problem of distribution, however, is still before us. Are we going to do anything about it?

Chapter 2

TRIMMING THE WICK

Our theme today is stated in rather old-fashioned language. We don't trim as many wicks as we used to. We do more changing of bulbs. Do you remember the days of gas illumination, when we used to put a new mantle on a Welsbach burner? Well, any one of these processes will do to express what we are talking about with respect to the Bible today. Since it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, there is the problem of keeping it up to its highest candle power.

From the very beginning of the Christian movement, missionaries have found that no lasting work can be done for their people unless the gospel has been given them in their own tongue. The translating missionary, therefore, is essential to successful Kingdom expansion. It is a slow, grueling task, that requires the utmost patience and persistence. It is much more than simply rendering the words of one language into the words of another. Professor James Moffatt, who translated the whole Bible into modern English, says that "the ideal of a translator is to let his readers enjoy part of the pleasure which the original once afforded to its audience in some far-off country." But, even when this is successfully done, it cannot be permanently done, for the reason that language, being a living thing, is always changing. It is the keeping up with this constant change that I want to speak of today under our title "Trimming the Wick."

The Bible never changes, but the languages in which it is translated do change. Languages, like people, are born, grow up, and die; but the Bible goes on forever.

Let us look at it in our own language. The first English Bible of which we have any knowledge was completed by John Wycliffe and his helpers in 1382. If I should read you a familiar passage

from that English Bible, you would scarcely understand it, and the spelling would amuse you, because the English language of the fourteenth century was very different from that of the seventeenth which produced our familiar King James version. The hand of Almighty God is certainly evident in the preparation of our King James version when we look at it from the angle of our approach today. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the English language was about where a young woman is in her late teens—not yet fully grown up, but radiantly charming and beautiful. The English language of those days had not yet been loaded down, as we know it, with thousands of scientific words, and with the cumbersome phrases we find necessary to convey our complicated ideas. We call it Elizabethan English—the English of Shakespeare and John Bunyan and the King James translators. There will never again be English as beautiful as that of 1611.

I doubt if there is a single Englishman to whom the world owes more than it does to William Tyndale, the man who first translated the Scriptures into English from the original Hebrew and Greek, and whose style and vocabulary are preserved in the King James, which is virtually a revision of Tyndale and appeared about seventy-five years after his death.

First of all, Tyndale had a passion to so translate the Bible that the humblest English toiler could understand and enjoy it. Next, he had a thorough knowledge of the ancient original tongues; and third, he was a practical reformer, who knew how to see the task through. That such a man should do such a task in such a way at such a time in the history of the English-speaking world must have been in the design of a loving, all-wise God. There is no book that has so profoundly influenced so much of the world over so long a period of time as the King James Bible. It is the brightest of all God's lamps. Yet, for a long time now its wick has needed trimming. Scarcely a month goes by that I do not receive a letter from some earnest Christian person asking if something cannot be done to present the Bible in such language that children can understand it and young people will be interested in it. The King James is beautiful, my correspondents invariably say, but it is archaic.

As an illustration of what these friends complain about, let us look at the fifth verse of the first chapter of John, from which we have taken our theme for this first little series of talks. The King James says: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." I have asked a great many people what they thought that meant, and they have given me various answers, most of them vague and some of them erroneous. The trouble is, that three centuries ago the English word "comprehend" was used in a way we never use it now. The best translation I have come upon for that verse is Dr. Goodspeed's: "The light is still shining in the darkness; for the darkness has never put it out." Anybody who can understand the English language at all can understand that. It is that sort of trimming of the wick that is being demanded by anxious lovers of the King James Bible.

So great did the demand for revising the King James become about sixty years ago, that a group of scholars in England, working with another group in America, produced the Revised Version which appeared in England in 1881. The American committee, feeling that "American English" was a bit different from "British English," asked the privilege of further study, and by agreement brought out the American Revised Version in 1901. We are all somewhat familiar with the American Revised Version. Now, only forty years later, interestingly enough, there is another revision committee meeting in this country preparing a complete revision of the American Revised Bible. Meanwhile we have had published a series of strictly modern English versions, such as the Twentieth Century, the Weymouth, and the Montgomery New Testaments and the Moffatt and Smith-Goodspeed Bibles. In the last seventy-five years there has been a great deal of trimming the wick of the old King James.

The same is true of the English Catholic Bible commonly called the Douay Version. It came out in complete published form at about the same time as the King James. It has undergone no revisions since 1749, until recently. Three months ago a new Catholic English New Testament appeared in this country. Sunday, May 18, 1941, was designated as the day to launch this new edition, and an effort is being made to place one of

these new English New Testaments in every Catholic home. It is evident that the Roman Church wants the light to shine brighter among its people. And I say more power, yes, more candle power, to them.

Let me tell you about the Turkish Bible. Before the founding of the present Turkish republic in 1920, the Bible had been provided for the Turks in Greek character, Armenian character, and Arabic character; for the Turks never had an alphabet of their own. In Turkey proper the Arabic script was standard. Then came the sweeping innovations under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. At the end of 1928 it was decreed that all books, newspapers, and public documents should appear in the Roman alphabet. But that was not all. The language should have expunged from its vocabulary a great list of foreign words and phrases, principally Arabic and Persian. Seldom, if ever, has a major language undergone so radical a change. As can be readily surmised, this practically snuffed out the light of all existing Turkish Bibles. Some months before this sweeping edict went into force, missionaries in Turkey, with rare foresight, transliterated the Book of Proverbs into the new Roman character form with the old language on the opposite page. It served as a sort of textbook, which helped the people learn the new language. Then the missionaries went on with their task. About four years ago the entire Bible had been skillfully translated into the new Roman Turkish. In June of 1941 came word that the typesetting was complete, and that sets of the proofs had been deposited in various places, so that, no matter what happens in that troubled part of the world, the new Turkish Bible could be reproduced by photography. The light of the Turkish Bible is flickering very dimly, but a brand new wick has been installed which someday will burn brightly.

I want you to look at one more picture with me. It is of my friend Reverend S. S. Feldmann, who like many a missionary was never trained to be a linguist, but who, a few years ago, was chosen by his fellow missionaries in the Philippines to revise the Bible in the Panayan language. In the spring of 1941 Mr. Feldmann and his committee of native scholars completed their task of trimming the wick for a million people living on

the two great islands of Panay and Negros. The first missionaries to enter the Philippines found there various languages which had never been reduced to writing. Panayan was one of them. The whole Bible first appeared in this language in 1912. A thoroughly corrected text was published in 1925. Now Mr. Feldmann and his associates have made ready for the printer a completely revised Panayan Bible. To indicate how badly it was needed, a missionary from Iloilo, where this language is spoken, told me on a recent furlough that it was as hard for the Panayan Christian to read his Bible of 1912, as it would be for me to read the English of Chaucer.

In essence, the story is this: Missionaries begin work among a primitive people. They are anxious to give them God's word in their native speech. Not being linguists, most missionaries at first do not do a very scholarly piece of work; but they do the best they can. Then they teach a group of the natives to read. Invariably, they discover one or two who take naturally to language study. They go on translating with the help of these natives. Ten years later the little group of workers have made so much progress in the recording of the language, that they look upon their first efforts as very immature. Meanwhile, the language itself has been changing because of increased contact with other groups and because of the entrance of new ideas. Here is an illustration of what happens. In making his first translation of the story about Elijah being transported to heaven in a chariot of fire, a missionary used two words for the chariot of fire which, years later, when steam railroads became a part of the life of the region, were taken over to mean a railroad train. The Scriptures, you see, had to be revised at once to make it clear that Elijah did not ascend to heaven on a railroad train. The wick grew smoky at that point, and needed trimming.

It may be that some day all the languages of men will possess the Scriptures; but, however soon that great day comes, the task of wick trimming will go on to the end of time—for two principal reasons: first, because many translations are unavoidably inaccurate at the beginning, due to the very circumstances surrounding the work; and, second, because lan-

guages are always growing and changing, and accurate shades of meaning must be expressed in fresh forms.

Let us add to our prayer lists these patient toilers, among the missionaries, who trim the wicks, that the light that shines in the darkness may always shine at its brightest.

Chapter 3

THE ELECTRIC EYE

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We are all friends of the Bible but there are a great many anxious ones among us. Some write in and say:

We quite agree with you that the Bible is a wonderful book that stands incomparably above all other books; we will take your word for it that it has been a great creative source of literature in many lands and among many tongues and tribes, that it is the best seller in every principal nation in the world. We grant you all this. But, with all our love for it, with all our feeling that we ought to read it, we must confess that we do not read it very often; and we do not get much out of it when we do read it. We do our Bible reading out of a sense of duty, and then turn to the novel we are reading, and sit up half the night to finish it. Can you tell us why this is? [And one friend answers her own question], I suppose it is original sin at work within my heart.

It is quite true that the Bible will never have much influence upon us unless we read it. From boyhood I have wondered what Jesus meant in that verse in the Sermon on the Mount where he says,

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single (that is, perfect) thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil (that is, diseased) thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

What puzzled me about that verse was identifying my eye

with a light. I always thought of my eye, not as a light, but as a channel through which light came. Nowadays the scientists are identifying our bodily functions with electric energy. This makes it easier for me to think of my eye as a lamp. When one ascends in the elevators to the broadcasting studios in Radio City he notices that everyone who enters or leaves the elevator passes through a beam of light which shines directly across the doorway. When I asked the operator about this one day he told me it was the electric eye; that as long as any solid object, like a person's body, intercepted that beam, he could not shut the doors nor move the car. It was an almost foolproof safety device, and I think most happily named the electric eye.

How, then, shall we keep our eye single, that our whole body shall be full of light? How shall we create within ourselves an enthusiasm for personal Bible reading that will help us to walk in the light as He is in the light?

First of all, we should frankly face the reasons that have created the difficulty. Among them is the tremendous competition of other printed material, much of which we feel we must read for the sake of our general culture, our influence upon our children, efficiency in our lifework, and for a score of other honest and honorable reasons.

Another difficulty is found in the very nature of the Bible itself. It is not a book. It is a library. If it were printed as current novels are printed, it would be three times as large a book as *Anthony Adverse*. Then there is always the question of where to begin. I am reminded of an experience I had during the first World War. I was for a time a religious worker at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. One day a fine-looking lad, a new recruit, came to my post and, seeing a stock of Testaments for distribution, asked me what they were. When I told him they were New Testaments, I had to explain that the New Testament was a part of the Bible. He had heard of the Bible, but he had never seen one. I told him that I would be glad to present him with a Testament if he would promise to read it. He promptly accepted the offer and trudged off with his little book. At about the same hour, however, the next day, my sailor was back at the desk with his Testament, saying he guessed he

wouldn't read it after all. When I inquired why, he said, "I started in at the beginning, but it reads like a telephone directory."

You see what had happened. The Book of Matthew opens with seventeen verses of genealogy, and is therefore not a very promising place for a novice to begin. Most of us do not have that much trouble, but we do need help and guidance in knowing where to start.

And then, when one does begin to read, he finds the language archaic, and the train of thought hard to follow.

If one honestly faces these practical hindrances to personal Bible reading he will set about to do something to overcome them. To overcome these hindrances will require effort. May I suggest the following: First, let us realize that nothing important in life can be mastered without some study. This particular demon of indifference cannot be driven out of our lives without prayer. If you have difficulty in maintaining a regular, helpful schedule of Bible reading, I suggest first of all that you pray about it. Acknowledge to Almighty God your utter dependence upon Him if you are to meet successfully the issues of life; acknowledge your foolishness in supposing you can find divine guidance without letting Him talk to you; then ask Him to give you the patience and the persistence to begin a practice of Bible reading that will become as indispensable to your daily life as your food and your sleep. Do that, not just once, but day after day. Do it today.

Then set about to master some mechanical difficulties, if you find it necessary. Before anything else, if you do not possess a suitable Bible, get one. This is not a simple matter, for there are more editions of the English Bible available in America today than of any other book at any time in history in any country on earth. Maybe you will want to talk to your pastor about it. Write for catalogues from the standard publishers of the Bible. People are very individualistic about their personal Bibles, but every searcher can find just what he wants if he makes an earnest search. At all events, equip yourself with a good readable, durable Bible.

Then, supply yourself with certain elemental helps to the

Bible, and learn how to use them. These will include a concordance and a Bible dictionary—not great, exhaustive compilations, but brief though scholarly editions. Maps of Bible lands should also be provided for guidance in one's reading. All of these helps can be secured bound in with your Bible text itself, if you so prefer.

There are two other items in one's Bible-reading equipment that, though not essential, are most desirable. One is a supplementary Bible in one of the generally accepted modern English translations. This is particularly helpful to young people, who seem to have the greatest difficulty with the style and clarity of the King James and the American Revised Versions. The other very desirable addition to the equipment is a book on how we got our Bible, of which there are several. The Bible you know was not written, like most books we read, by an American this year or last. It was written by various people all of whom lived at least nineteen hundred years ago and some of them as long as twenty-seven hundred years ago. It was not written all in one language, but in two and neither of them was the English language. The sixty-six books in it were chosen out of a much larger body of writings and before the book came to our hands it had to be translated. All of this constitutes an absolutely unique and fascinating story that every serious person who proposes to become a regular Bible reader ought to know.

And now to the main business—how shall we go about reading the Bible?

First of all, set aside a regular time for reading every day. No matter how full your life is, this can be done. It is in the schedule of some of the busiest people I know. They have put Bible reading in the class with eating and sleeping where it belongs. Let the chosen time be one when the mind is fresh; for the Bible is not the easy sort of reading that one can do at the close of a busy day when one is tired. I know a man who deliberately retires a quarter of an hour earlier than he otherwise would, so that he can have those fifteen minutes for Bible reading the first thing every morning. I know another who, for many years, read his daily paper at some other time, and committed

to memory hundreds of passages in the Bible as he commuted to work in the morning.

And then, what? Well, for one thing, read the Bible as nearly as you can in the same way you read other books. It may have proved helpful to some people to open their Bibles at random, and, with their eyes shut, put their finger on the page and read the verse thus indicated as a guide for the day; but I do not recommend it. We do not read novels and the newspaper that way.

As a helpful beginning I would recommend that you read the easier, simpler parts of the Bible first. These are, for the most part, the stories. There is no more engaging literature in the world than biography and short stories of human interest. Well, there are plenty of these in the Bible. Take the Book of Ruth. It requires twenty minutes to read the Book of Ruth. No one would think of reading a magazine story of that length in four sittings on four successive days. Read the four chapters all at a sitting. Do the same with Jonah. Did you know that, of the sixty-six books in the Bible exactly half of them can be read in forty-five minutes or less apiece, and the whole thirty-three of the shorter books can be read in eleven hours and forty-five minutes? I strongly recommend that you read these shorter books one at a sitting. Some of them are not stories and are not such simple reading. But here is where your Bible dictionary and other helps come in.

For longer story material, read sections of books at a sitting. You will find no better reading in the city library than that contained in the Book of Genesis, chapter thirty-seven, and from chapter thirty-nine to the end of the book—the story of Joseph, the most complete biographical sketch in the Bible.

So far I have been speaking entirely about the Old Testament. Did you know that you can read the whole of the simplest, oldest, shortest, and fastest moving of the gospels—Mark—in less than two hours? Try it as soon as you have finished this chapter. You will, if I am not mistaken, have a thrilling new religious experience, if you have never done it before.

Then, for a change, turn to the little Book of Philemon. First, read about it in your Bible dictionary. The human element is

woven in with the divine in a way that makes the truth from God take hold of your heart. Read Galatians. It will take you about thirty minutes. You will not understand it all; but it will give you a glimpse into the personality of Paul that will make your spirit tingle because Paul wrote it, in a holy passion of righteous indignation against his foes.

One final suggestion: and this may seem to contradict my counsel of a few moments ago when I said read the Bible as you read any other book. It is this: Read over and over again the parts of the Bible that grip you. For many years the Presbytery of Seattle has promoted what they call Bible Mastery Month every October. They ask those who join the movement to read the book chosen for the year (this year it is the Book of Galatians) every day during the month of October. That is a most wholesome suggestion. Remember the Bible is God's word. It is like other things that only God can create—like the sunset and the refreshing breeze, like the presence of a lifelong friend, like love and sublime music. Once may be enough to read a story in a magazine; but once is not enough to caress one's wife or child, to listen to Handel's *Largo*, or stand out under the stars on a clear November night. No, these things never grow old—neither does the word of God.

Well, we have said just enough to reveal how much more there is to say. Read the book; for in it God speaks to you. Read it for yourself, by yourself. If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light!

## Chapter 4

### THE LOWER LIGHTS

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In the last chapter we were discussing the personal use of the Bible. Here let us consider the use of the Bible in the home. Most homes are humble and the light of the knowledge of Christ Jesus that shines in them might be spoken of severally as the lower lights that we sing about in P. P. Bliss' immortal gospel hymn. The home has always offered the best opportunity for the reading and study of the Bible of any social institution on earth.

Why do we have homes? It is an instinct, yes. But we humans go beyond instinct. We think things out upon the basis of our instincts. Every parent wishes the best for his children; the best in health, in education, in opportunity, in companionship, and most of all, in character. Homes are maintained to assure just these things. The location of the home, its appointments, its daily program, its atmosphere, all are studied that those who live there may grow in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Which immediately suggests the Bible. The Bible has been the cornerstone of the best homes always and everywhere. The home is where the Bible was first used by Christians. The first Christians were Jews. They carried over the custom of Scripture reading in the home from their ancestral practices. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read:

And these words, which I command thee this day,  
shall be in thine heart:  
And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy  
children,  
and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine  
house,  
and when thou walkest by the way, and when  
thou liest down, and when thou risest up. . . .

In New Testament days the churches met in homes. The schools likewise. These have outgrown the home; but the Bible still does its best work in its original setting. The Sunday school movement came into being principally because the Bible was being neglected in so many homes. There are some things that can be done with the Bible for children better in the Sunday school than in the home because a larger group of the same age are doing them together, but far more can be done for the development of character in the long run, through the use of the Bible in the home than anywhere else on earth. It is not an overstatement to say that the foundations of the America we are so gratefully appreciating today as the brightest spot in a terribly dark world, were laid in generations of humble homes where the chief book was the Bible. To our founding fathers it was an intolerable thought that a single American home should be established without a Bible. The American Bible Society was brought into being largely because of a report brought to the church leaders in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere in 1815 by Samuel Mills who had traveled extensively in the newly settled country beyond the Alleghenies and had discovered so many Bibleless homes there. Four times during its one hundred and twenty-five years of service, between 1829 and 1892, the American Bible Society made a serious effort to supply a Bible to every home in the United States. No Christian organization could have aimed more directly at our nation's primary need than this.

The situation today presents insuperable barriers that did not exist even as late as 1892. To begin with there are approximately thirty million homes in the United States. It would take hundreds of thousands of dollars to canvass all of these homes and more hundreds of thousands to supply Bibles to those found without them. But there is, of course, a more serious difficulty than that. It is that the Bible finds so much competition in the reading matter that enters the average American home today, and in the further fact that there are so many forces that tend to break up family solidarity as compared to the conditions of earlier days. But, formidable as these obstacles are, there should be put forth every effort possible to keep the lower lights of the

family Bibles shining in the American home. When the Bible departs from the American home, America, that country where more forms of freedom have been enjoyed on a wider scale and for a longer time than in any land in history, will cease to be.

The successful use of the Bible in the home depends upon the parents. They are the keepers of the light. I know a pastor of a large church who is called upon to marry scores of couples every year. He never does it in a hurry. He always counsels with the young man and woman at some length. He tells them that there is little use trying to establish a home without exalting the Bible in it. If they do not have a Bible he gives them one.

Children unconsciously grow interested in the interests of their parents. Parental enthusiasm for music, flowers, or art, is contagious. Likewise parental enthusiasm for the Bible. Parents make a frightful mistake in supposing, as so many do, that the Sunday school can take care of this matter of interesting the child in the Bible and instructing him in its teachings. The Sunday school has the child, at most, but an hour a week and in the case of thousands of children does not get its chance at their lives until it is too late.

How then shall we put the Bible where it belongs in the culture of our homes in days like ours and homes like ours? First of all, it is essential that the family's use of the Bible be natural and unforced. This can be insured in families just being established, by an early introduction of the Bible into the family's life so that the children cannot remember a time when the Bible was not a part of their existence. Fanny Crosby, who wrote two thousand gospel hymns, some of which have sung their way into the hearts and spiritual experiences of multitudes of grateful people, says, "When I was a child this book had a practical place in both home and nation. . . . Its truth was not only born with me; it was bred into my life. My grandmother and my mother took pains that I knew the Bible better than any other book."

Parents should take that last sentence as the solemn goal of all their endeavors with children of preschool age. It is not an arduous task for a mother to set for herself. There are many lovely editions of the Bible and Bible stories, with fascinating

and instructive illustrations that may occupy the Sunday afternoon and bedtime hour as profitably for the parent as for the child. The testimony of almost every saint I have ever heard or read reveals that his joy in the reading of the Word and the striving for the better life it pointed out, began at his mother's knee.

But, how about those thousands of families where this promising start was never made, where the children are growing up and their interests outside the home are multiplying. I have this suggestion to make. Consider the use of the Bible as a part of every occasion when the family is together as a family. These times may not come often, but many families meet together once a day at the evening meal. I can imagine something like the following taking place in thousands of homes—many of them, alas, homes that are definitely connected with the church:

Tonight the father or the mother might say, as the family sits down to the evening meal,

Before we eat I have something to say to you all, something I think you will all be glad to hear. I want to suggest that we do something together that I know will help the family in many ways. These are pretty serious days through which we are living. We've all studied our American history and I think will agree that America was never in more danger than she is just now. Every American ought to do his bit for his country and some of us have been wondering what we could do. I am going to suggest something I think we can do that all through American history has helped strengthen our country. I suggest that we read the Bible for a few moments and then bow our heads in prayer at the beginning of our evening meal together tonight and every night.

I want to be as realistic as I can in making this suggestion. I know that there are hundreds of homes where to say as much as I have just suggested is enough to put the father or mother who says it into a cold sweat, but I am convinced that a few casualties in this supper table battleground will be worth more than hundreds in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. I realize that

the father who says this may scarcely know where to turn in his Bible to begin his reading and that he may never in his life have uttered a prayer in the presence of others. But, after all, it doesn't take much ingenuity to prepare himself. If he will lay his case before his pastor or write to the headquarters of his church he will get immediate and adequate help. If he has no church connection he can go to some local minister. There is one in almost every American community. If, having made a start the parents give themselves earnestly to the matter they will soon have established a regular habit of family devotions which in my opinion is the thing most desperately needed in America's defense program at this moment and, mark this, it could be set up in a formidable way without the outlay of a single dollar of tax money. I know the President of the United States is for it. In a recent broadcast he said of the Bible, "I commend its thoughtful and reverent reading to all our people. Its refining and elevating influence is indispensable to our most cherished hopes and ideals." I know the Catholic church is for it. They have just issued a new version of the New Testament in modern American English and are setting out to see that one is put to use in every Catholic home. I know that children will readily respond to it and that its idealism will appeal to all wholesome young people.

Let me make one final suggestion. On a recent visit to Chicago I called up the pastor of a large Lutheran church because I had read in one of the news weeklies about the success attending his work. When I asked him to what he attributed it he said, "Principally to one thing. I have persuaded 90 per cent of my people to have regular family prayers." Now his families—and there are twenty-nine hundred of them—are not different from the average run of American urban families. They have moderate incomes, their members work at all sorts of tasks that keep them coming and going at various hours; they have many other interests; there are young married couples, families with grown young people still living at home, elderly couples with all their children flown from the nest—yet 90 per cent of them—and that means over twenty-six hundred families, involving about seven thousand people have regular family prayers. As far as the

church is concerned the result is that, although they have a new building which when it was built, in 1925, was regarded as adequate to care for the church's growth for many years to come, is already so inadequate that they have to hold three services every Sunday morning to accommodate the worshipers. The two problems that beset so many churches, this Chicago church knows nothing about, the financial problem and the problem of attendance, and best of all, the church is constantly receiving new members upon the profession of their faith in Christ as their personal Saviour. Adult baptisms are not simply frequent, they are continuous.

"How did you get the people to establish the family altar?" I asked this pastor. Then he told me a tale of pastoral devotion that surpasses, I think, anything I have ever heard. He said that he had personally taught most of the families, going to their homes in the early morning, and in many cases not once but several times, until their training was sufficient to trust them to continue alone. It has, he says, solved countless problems of a personal sort among the people of his families.

What the Bible in the homes of that church has done, it can do for your family and what it has done for the life of that church it could do for the life of our nation if all who believe in the Bible began to read it. In the face of the terrifying prospects confronting Bible-born America at this hour, I believe there is no one thing that our great denominations could do to aid in the nation's program of defense that could be comparable to such a program of keeping the lower lights burning in millions of American homes.

## Chapter 5

### LAMPLIGHTERS



Most of us seldom take a single step in absolute darkness. It is a terrifying experience to many people when they do. Our well-equipped generation has more physical light to go by than any of its predecessors. Our streets are lighted and many of our country roads. When we drive out on the highway on a cloudy night we follow the gleam of our auto lamps. When we walk through the woods or across the pasture, we carry a lantern or a flashlight. I am told that in backward countries a flashlight will bring more in barter than almost anything else.

Do you remember Robert Louis Stevenson's poem in the *Child's Garden of Verses* called "The Lamplighter" about the little boy looking out of the window as night is falling, to see the lamplighter go by? The lighter's name in the poem is "Leerie" and the little boy concludes with these lines:

But I, when I am stronger and  
Can choose what I'm to do,  
O Leerie, I'll go round at night  
And light the lamps with you.

Well, I can remember, as though it were yesterday, the Leerie of my little home town in Pennsylvania. He carried a little ladder slung over his arm and a taper in his hand as he made his rounds from lamp to lamp. More than once I trudged along with him and envied him his daily task. It is no longer done that way in most communities. Nowadays somewhere in a powerhouse a man throws a switch and the whole town is alight. Even in blacked-out cities abroad somebody keeps a few shaded guiding lights aflicker for the safety of the public.

The world is full of lamplighters. In these paragraphs I want

to talk about those who light the lamp which the Psalmist spoke about when he said, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ goes it carries this lamp in its hand.

Bibles are so common in our country that we do not appreciate this. But in lands where the church has stepped into the midst of other religions she is recognized as the religion with the book.

I heard a Methodist bishop offering prayer the other day. His spirit and his language were so beautiful that we were all carried into the presence of God. One particular petition he voiced has lingered with me, "Grant, O Lord, that we may lead many a little child into the presence of God."

There are millions of children, even in our enlightened land, who never will hear of God or learn of their Saviour, Jesus Christ, unless the church lights the lamp for them so that they can see their way. There are no Bibles in their homes and there is nobody in the circle of their acquaintance who has any interest in the Bible.

About one hundred and sixty years ago in England the church began to consider this question seriously because there was an increasing number of children who could read and also an appalling number of homes that had no Bibles. Out of this anxiety grew the Sunday school movement. The Sunday school goes by various names today. In some places it is called the Church School, in others the Sunday Church School to distinguish it from the weekday church school or the vacation church school. But I prefer to call it the Bible school. That name not only suggests the purpose of its origin, but calls attention to the book that is central and indispensable in its curriculum.

The Bible school is the foremost lamplighting league in the world. Consider these facts. There is no educational institution in all the world to compare with it in size, in universality, and in adaptability, and in my opinion, in importance. It operates in fifty-one different countries, and it thrives wherever it operates. It has, according to the latest statistics available, a student body of 34,139,000 and a faculty of 3,146,000. It numbers its scholars by the millions in every continent. You will be interested to know that next in enrollment to North America and Europe

comes Africa with about 8,000,000 scholars and teachers—a great army of lamplighters at work in the Dark Continent.

Here in our country, which is predominantly Protestant, practically every Protestant church has one or more Bible schools. Last year there were 160,430 of these schools enrolling 18,600,000 pupils, and with 2,100,000 teachers and officers—a noble company indeed for which every one of us should be deeply grateful.

I recently sought out a friend of mine who knows more about these figures than, I think, anyone else in our country and I said, "If there are so many in our Bible schools how many are yet to be reached? How many young people and boys and girls have never yet had their lamps lighted by anybody?" He told me that the figure I asked for is a very hard one to determine. Then he showed me a mass of data that had been collected in order to make a reliable estimate. Next he told me something that startled me. He said that at least one half of the boys and girls of America from five to seventeen years of age, which is about fifteen million, have had no religious instruction of any kind, Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic—they know nothing at all about God's word. The God who made them and who controls their destiny has never spoken to them. Here is something for those of us who love the Bible to think about—fifteen million boys and girls of school age in our own country walking in the dark! What can we do to reduce this alarming figure?

Since practically every church has a Bible school, there is no opportunity to establish more schools. What we need is to improve the ones we have. This obviously lies with the teachers and the officers of the schools. They are the master lamplighters. How can we help them put the lamp of truth in more young hands?

First of all, we can see that our schools are equipped with Bibles. Strangely enough some Bible schools do not use Bibles. A little lad from an unchurched home came back from Bible school one Sunday and was asked by his father what the lesson had been about, "Oh," said the lad, "it was about a man who was very handsome and never ate any meat and wouldn't do what the king told him to because he thought the king was

wrong so they threw him in a hole full of wild beasts and"—here his father interrupted and said, recalling the Bible stories he had heard in his childhood, "That was the story of Daniel in the lion's den from the Bible." "Oh, no," said the boy, "it wasn't from the Bible. The teacher read it out of a magazine!"

If a Bible school does nothing more, it should at least give boys and girls a chance to look at the Bible, handle the Bible, learn how to find the great passages in it and be encouraged to use it for themselves. Too many schools use only quarterlies and other lesson helps.

But let us assume that our Bible school has a Bible for every pupil, that the superintendent reads from it, that golden texts are taught, that drills are held by which the pupil comes to know where each book is to be found, and memory work is done in some of the great passages. Let us suppose that when the boys and girls attain a certain age, the school, as many do, presents them with Bibles of their own. After assuming all this, there is yet something more that is very much needed.

The lamplighter must have more than his little ladder and his taper and a pocket full of matches, as Leerie and the man in my home town did. He must take his job seriously. He must have a conscience about it. He must realize how important it is that he do his work thoroughly. If he should fail to light some street a robbery or accident might happen there. As the lamplighter of the town, he carries a very definite moral responsibility.

The same is true of the Bible teacher. He must be one who not only has mastered the book himself (and I fear many of our teachers have not done that) but he must be one who has been mastered by the book. His soul must be touched by the Holy Spirit so that his eyes have been glad to see wonderful things out of the law of God. He should not be content to commend the Bible alone by what he says about it, but by his whole manner of life as he tries to reflect its teachings.

There is only one reason why we light lamps and there is only one reason for introducing a child to the Bible—it is that he may find his way, avoid danger, and not get lost. God's Word is given us that we may clearly see the claims of Christ upon our life. Teachers of the Bible miss their calling when they put any-

thing else first. Oh yes, there are other things to be said about lamps. They may be very ornate and pleasing in design. They may be well placed. They may harmonize with their surroundings. Many similar things may be said about the Bible. It is beautiful literature. It lends itself to many helpful uses. This is all very well, but it is decidedly secondary to the main purpose in God's gift of His Word.

The goal of every teacher in a Bible school should be that by the time the pupil reaches the threshold of adult life, or earlier, the Bible shall have been made so indispensable a part of his life that he cannot get along without it and will continue its regular use on his own initiative the rest of his days.

If there is anything more important in a Bible school than the study of the book itself it is this attitude toward the book on the part of the teacher. There is abundant testimony that, where teachers have made it unmistakable to their pupils that they themselves have come to look upon the Bible not as they do upon other books, but regard it as the Word of God which they will disobey at their peril, little lamps are invariably lighted that never go out, paths become clear, and roadways are marked by passages of Scripture that will never fail to comfort, strengthen, and guide to the end of life.

I picked up and reread last spring the report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for 1937. In the section on India it speaks of an ancient Syrian church in Travancore where there is a wonderful old brass lamp with about one hundred arms, hanging from the ceiling. At the end of each arm is a cup with oil and wick. At the close of the service, the young people come up and take one of the wicks from the lamp to guide them home through the night. That chandelier is a perfect picture of the ideal Bible school teacher.

We are asking how we can light more lamps among the fifteen million boys and girls of school age in our country who are walking in the dark. The most hopeful strategy is through our Bible schools. We do not need more schools. We need better schools. To get better schools we need more teachers who are true lamplighters, at the flaming altar of whose devotion to

Christ pupils may touch the tapers of their affection and troop  
away with their lamps forever aglow singing,

Light of the world, illumine  
This darkened world of thine,  
Till everything that's human  
Be filled with the divine;  
Till every tongue and nation,  
From sin's dominion free,  
Rise in the new creation  
Which springs from love and thee.

## Chapter 6

### YOU CANNOT BLACK OUT THE STARS



It is nothing new to see a copy of the Bible on a hotel dresser. It did arouse my curiosity one day last March, however, to find a card lying conspicuously on top of the Bible in my room in a hotel in Seattle, Washington. It was an announcement to the guests of a test blackout of Seattle, the first to be held in any large city in the country.

From the standpoint of the city authorities the test was a satisfying success. Not a light could be seen. Men had turned out or covered every light they had—every light but the stars! I never saw anything like the stars over the city of Seattle on the night of March 7, 1941.

I have seen the stars on a crisp November night from an unlighted countryside when they seemed to be hanging so near that one could reach up and pull them down. But to see them similarly above the towers and spires of a modern city set on a cluster of hills like Seattle was an unforgettable sight.

I thought of the card lying on the Bible on my hotel dresser. And I thought about the lights that men can cover and turn off—and of the stars that God lights in his heaven that men cannot touch and of the Bible God has given men, just as he has given men the stars, and I thought of the prologue to John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God," and of how the blessed evangelist goes on to say in the fifth verse, "The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" and I never can forget how Professor Goodspeed translates the last phrase "and the darkness has never put it out." And I thought of Viscount Grey's oft-quoted statement made as he stood at his office window on the night England entered the first World War, "The lights are going out all over Europe" and I reveled in the conviction that

Viscount Grey was not quite right—that one light had not gone out in Europe and that it never would go out in Europe—and that that light was the Bible.

I thought of some of the darkest spots in Europe and I wondered. I thought of Russia, darkest spot of all. On the train next day leaving Seattle, as we circled around the base of snow-laden Mount Shasta, I came across, in a paper I was reading, the translation of an article from the magazine of the Militant Godless of Russia who have played a major role in dissecting every vestige they can of the Christian faith out of their nation's life. I ran upon this sentence,

The pectoral crosses, daily prayers, the custom of church attendance, the priests, the external life of the church, have disappeared. But even the smallest people know the Bible story. Even those who hold the Bible story to be a pious legend do not forget it. Everyone knows about Jesus Christ. His existence is not doubted.

I read this and I said, "You cannot black out the stars." Then I thought of Germany where the ruling tyrants would strangle to death the religion of Christ, make Germany their God, Hitler their Saviour, and *Mein Kampf* their Bible. I recalled what Luther said about the Bible in the days when the Reformation was a-borning. He said, "No clearer book has ever been written in this wide world than the Bible . . . don't let them lead you out and away from it. . . . For if you step out you are lost; they take you wherever they wish. If you remain within, you will be victorious." And I wondered if Hitler and Himmler and Goebbels and Rosenberg were leading Germany out and away from the Bible and I returned to my desk to find the latest annual report of the Prussian Bible Society of Berlin. It stated that in 1940 the society had distributed 289,013 Bibles in Germany as against 127,234 in the year 1938 and I said, "You cannot black out the stars."

I began to look around the rest of Europe. I had read that in the Russian attack on Finland in 1939 the Bible House of the Finnish church had been destroyed and all their stock of

Scriptures lost, but I discovered that with the help of the British and Foreign Bible Society there had been distributed in Finland in 1940, two hundred and forty-three thousand volumes of Scriptures as against forty-three thousand the year before and I said, "You cannot black out the stars."

I turned to Sweden and I found that on May 11, 1941, which was Reformation Day for the Swedes, an illustrious company of two thousand people including King Gustaf V, the crown prince, and other members of the royal family, gathered in the cathedral at Stockholm to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the publishing of the first Swedish Bible, that the government had issued a special commemorative postage stamp, and that in the call to this significant gathering the archbishop had said,

The great men of our history who are shining examples to us in dark and difficult times were supported in their activity by the spirit of the Bible. . . . If our nation is still to be saved and to be able to withstand the trial now passing across the world, then the Bible must again become a living book for us, a book that speaks and gives us direction, that comforts us in distress. . . . The Bible must again become the conscience of our nation. The spirit of the Bible must again be honored in our public life.

And I said to myself, "You cannot black out the stars."

There came to my desk some information sheets concerning the appalling spiritual needs of the war prisoners and refugees in Germany and France and I found that men were crying out for copies of the Word of God to fill the morally corroding emptiness of their idle lives. Among other paragraphs were some touching letters of thanks from those to whom Bibles in their own tongues had been distributed. One was a letter from a former Communist in a refugee camp in southern France which concluded with these dramatic phrases, ". . . of bread I will say nothing, also nothing of money. But of Bibles we still have need" and I said, "You cannot black out the stars."

I turned to China for I read some disquieting dispatches about

fresh uprisings of Communist forces and I wondered if China were after all moving in Russia's direction and then I discovered that China in 1940 had purchased 5,267,529 copies of the Christian Scriptures which was 6 per cent more than she bought in 1939 in spite of her deepening impoverishment and that this figure—if you count bound copies of single gospels as books—made China the top-ranking country in the world in the number of Scripture volumes purchased in 1940.

If literary-minded China with her 457,000,000 people is going to make the Bible her own in the years to come, as looks very possible at the moment, then the forces against Christ in this world are in for a tougher time than they have had in centuries. And I said with new assurance, "You cannot black out the stars."

My thoughts came back to England and America. England and America are inexplicable apart from the Bible. In a sense the English people are not European, because unlike the other nations of that part of the world they have been so definitely molded by the Bible. England possessed the Bible, albeit in an imperfect form and to a limited extent, but nevertheless in her own tongue, a full century before the rest of Europe. The Anglo-Saxon heart leaped to the message of the Bible so much that the terse epigrams of the Scriptures became the tools that carved out England's attitudes and philosophies. When, in the coronation service of an English king, the Bible is called the most valuable thing this world affords, it is not a pious sentiment but the expression of the Englishman's conviction on the matter. When Queen Victoria handed a Bible to one of her nation's leaders with the words, "This is the secret of England's greatness" she stated a fact that is as demonstrable as any connected with the history of the British Empire. England's King James version of the Bible is the greatest book in the world if measured by its sheer literary beauty, or by what it has done for England, or by what it did in shaping the life of the American colonies and of the American nation that grew out of them, or by what it has done in the hands of missionaries who have gone out into all the continents to translate the Scriptures into the tongues of men, or by what it has done alone, unaided, in transforming the lives

of individuals now for over three hundred years. It is God's brightest lamp in the hands of men, and you can pull all the shades down and turn off all the switches in the British Empire and you cannot keep the light of the King James Bible from shining. "You cannot black out the stars."

To my mind the most significant thing about the recent dramatic meeting on the high seas of the Prime Minister and the President was that among other things which took place aboard their vessel, was the reading of this book in a service of public worship because these two men were symbols of two nations that believe that in the Word of God is to be found the only pathway over which men and nations can find peace and moral progress for the world.

And here in America? It is easy to grow discouraged about America. Her life is too easy. She is too rich. The softness that turned to rot in the rich nations of the past is so apparent in her life. But there is another side of American life on which I like to dwell. It is a simply tremendous growth of interest in the Bible which has marked the last few years. I run upon evidence of this from many quarters. The head of a great publishing firm told me recently that he thought every publisher in America ought to feature some new attractive edition of the Bible at frequent intervals not for profit but to help encourage the reading of the book. He regards such a program as the patriotic duty of American publishers. He thinks America will perish unless this is done. I saw an abridged form of the Bible on the news-stands at twenty-five cents. When I called the publisher, he told me that in its first eight months, his book of selections from the Bible had outsold in that period any other book he had ever published. The eagerness with which the enlisted men of the nation's forces are accepting the Bible from the hands of their chaplains shows no diminution of interest over that of former mobilizations. The Roman Catholic Church in this country recently prepared a scholarly revision of the English New Testament and are undertaking to place a copy of it in every Catholic home in the country. And I could go on at some length to indicate to you my own conviction that there never will be in this

country a blackout of the Bible any more than you can black out the stars.

The fact is that the Bible is not just another book. The Bible is the book. It is a voice and the voice is God's. So responsive has the human heart been to the voice of this book that men everywhere are demanding to hear it. The story of its boring through the mountainous barriers of language is the miracle of literature.

How are you going to black out a book with the literary virility of this book. How are you going to black out a book that every day is being carried to the doors of forgotten people in almost every land on earth by a company of several thousand colporteurs who sell it not as a means of profit but because they believe every man on earth should own it, read it, and live by it. Hitler may snuff out the four freedoms in half the earth but he cannot black out the stars. He may impose his rule of blood and iron upon men of many races. He may require the reading of his awful book of hate but he cannot black out the words that God has at sundry times and in divers manners spoken unto the fathers by the prophets and in these latter days has been speaking unto us by His Son whom He has appointed heir of all things and by whom also He made the worlds. God has spoken, the God whose love is beautiful and terrible. Men must listen when He speaks. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away." You cannot black out the stars!

SERIES II

The Truth That Makes Men Free

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## Chapter 7

### HOW WE GOT OUR ENGLISH BIBLE

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Many books have been written on the subject of this chapter. Sunday school lessons have dealt with it. Sermons have been preached on it. It is eminently right that all this should have been done for it is a matter that every Bible reader should know at least in outline. We have a chance in these brief paragraphs to say very little. Let us do it by hanging our facts on three very common names—John, William, and James. The first two were ardent scholar-reformers. The third was a king.

John was John Wycliffe, who did his work while England was still speaking the language of Chaucer. It was one hundred years before Columbus discovered America. It was also one hundred years before any nation in Europe had the Bible in its own tongue. John Wycliffe was what people today would call a go-getter. He bristled with ideas, was the rare combination of the scholar and the man of initiative. He was an Oxford man. He won prominence first as a schoolman, then as a politician, and finally as a reformer. The older he grew, the more vehement became his preaching against the evils of his day. He was determined that something must be done for the religious life of the people of England. So he did two things.

First, he gathered around him other scholars and translated the whole of the Latin Bible into English. England thus became the first of the modern nations of Europe to have the whole Bible in the language of the people. Printing had not yet come in, so that every copy of Wycliffe's Bible had to be written by hand. But hundreds of them must have been made; for there are more than one hundred and seventy copies scattered about in various libraries today!

Wycliffe's Bible was a translation from a translation; and not a very good one at that. The Latin texts he and his colleagues

used were inferior ones, but Wycliffe was a master of the English of his day—the English of Chaucer.

England was even then ripe for the message of freedom. There was something in the mixture of English blood that responded to Christ's message for the individual man. Although the divine right of kings still kept the people in subjection, those same people were beginning to feel that they should control their own religious affairs. Because of all this the manuscript copies of Wycliffe's Bible, though very expensive, became immensely popular. Though persistent persecution dogged the steps of those possessing the book, it was widely read during the fifteenth century. It is related that as much as five marks (the equivalent of two hundred dollars today) was paid for one copy and that a farmer gave a load of hay for a few chapters of the Book of James. Wycliffe offered England a book that was deeply effecting the people's lives. That was the first thing he did.

The other thing that John Wycliffe did was to gather about him a band of poor priests who were called Lollards. These he sent out to preach the Word to the people who now had access to the Scriptures in their own tongue. This evangelistic movement was most successful. The followers of the Lollards, who were called by the same name, became so numerous, that, shortly after Wycliffe's death, a bitter enemy of the movement said that if you met any two men, one of them was sure to be a Lollard. They became a great political force in England. Let us remember that all this began more than a century before Luther. Wycliffe has been very properly called the Morning Star of the Reformation.

During his lifetime Wycliffe was shielded from his enemies by the powerful patronage of influential friends, but the stream of unrest created by his Bible and his Lollards widened as the years went on, and indeed has never stopped flowing. As late as 1521, five hundred Lollards were arrested in London by the bishop. That was one hundred and thirty-seven years after Wycliffe died. We are not surprised to read that in 1428, forty-four years after his death, Wycliffe's body was disinterred by order of the Council of Constance, burned, and his ashes cast into the river Swift.

So much for John. Now who was William? William Tyndale was born about the time Columbus discovered America, and I wonder if any man has done more for his fellow men in the last five centuries than William Tyndale.

Let me sketch him in for you in a few brief sentences. He was a scholar. After ten years at Oxford and Cambridge he became so skilled, so says one of his biographers, in the seven languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French, that, whichever he spoke, you would suppose it was his native tongue. He was a scholar and a reformer with a passion. Distressed by the ignorance, conservatism, and dullness of many of the clergy of his day, he was determined that the people should hear the Word of God for themselves. To one of the leaders of the church he said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost." For, as he said later, "I had perceaved by experyence, how that it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in any truth, excepte the scripture were playnly layde before their eyes in their mother tonge, that they might se the processe, ordre and meaninge of the texte. . . ." He was a scholar, a reformer, and he was also a thoroughly practical promoter. When Tyndale translated the Scriptures into English, he would not produce mere manuscripts—not he. He would see the work through the press, so that the books might be broadcast by the thousands, for printing by movable metallic type had been introduced into England in 1477.

But beyond all these qualifications are two that were supreme in William Tyndale. He achieved unerring mastery of the English language at the very moment it was budding into its flower; so that Tyndale's version fixed our standard English once for all, and laid foundations that apparently will never be moved as long as English lasts. And finally, Tyndale was made of martyr stuff. At all costs he would see his program through. And he paid the final cost; for, finding that he would not be tolerated in England if he put the Scriptures into the "vulgar" tongue, he left his native land never to return. In 1524, when he was forty years old, he became convinced that there was no place in England where he would be unmolested in his work.

Germany and Holland were in those days the liberal countries of Europe. After landing in Hamburg and probably visiting with Luther at Wittenberg, Tyndale began his work of printing the New Testament in Cologne in 1525. Later he moved to Worms, and again to Marburg and yet again to Antwerp to elude his enemies who were relentlessly dogging his steps. Meanwhile his New Testaments were finding their way to England, smuggled in under false labels. In the diary of a German scholar of those days we read that the English people, in spite of the opposition of their king, were so eager for the gospel as to affirm that they would buy a New Testament even if they had to pay a hundred thousand pieces of money for it.

Finally after twelve exciting years on the Continent, with the task uncompleted, being betrayed by one supposed to be a friend, William Tyndale was thrown into prison, strangled, and his body burned.

Tyndale's dying prayer is a classic of English history: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." The prayer was swiftly answered; for even while Tyndale was languishing in prison, the Bible, the work of another translator and incorporating some of Tyndale's translations, did become by royal consent the open book of the English people. Its reception was instant, widespread, and enthusiastic. Through the next seventy-five years Bible after Bible appeared, but they were all based on Tyndale's translation. Of the Bible you and I read, about 80 per cent of the Old Testament and 90 per cent of the New are Tyndale's.

And finally, who was James? He was James I, King of England. He was no saint like Wycliffe and Tyndale, but, brought up in Scotland, he did know his Bible. When he came to the throne, England had become a first-class nation. The Spanish Armada had been defeated; the East India Company had been formed; the colonizing of America was in the offing. English literature was bursting into full flower with Shakespeare, Bacon, Spenser, and others. But things religious in England were in a bad way when James came to the throne in 1603. The Established Church and the Puritans were at loggerheads. James called a conference to straighten out these matters. Although there were various English Bibles in use, some preferred by the Established Church

and others by the Puritans, apparently the authorization of a single version of the Bible was not on the docket of this conference; it came up, however, almost by accident, on the last day of the meeting, and King James took action. It was the best thing he ever did. And he did it well. I want you to read his words just as the clerk recorded them at this historic session, that: "this bee done by the best learned in both Vniuersities, after them to be reuiewed by the Bishops, and the chiefe learned of the Church; from them to bee presented to the Priuie-Councell; and lastly to bee ratified by his Royall authoritie, and so this whole Church to be bound vnto it, and none other." Fifty-four men were selected to do the work, which lasted for at least four years. They went back to the original tongues, comparing and recomparing, till finally our King James version of the Bible appeared in 1611. So nearly perfect was it that, although there had been six or seven major revisions of the Bible in the seventy-five years between Tyndale's and the appearance of the King James, this new version gradually forged to the front, and no one proposed to revise it for at least two hundred and seventy years. And no revision to this day has seriously challenged its supremacy.

With the consecrated genius of Tyndale at its foundation, the King James Bible—the work of the best scholars of the day, produced at the very moment when the genius of the language for noble prose was at its height—became what Professor Phelps of Yale has called "the most beautiful book in the world in any language, a book which has exercised an incalculable influence upon religion, upon manners, upon literature, and upon character."

So I lay my wreaths of gratitude upon the monuments of John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century, of William Tyndale in the sixteenth, and of King James in the seventeenth for what they did to give the world its greatest book. It remade England. It gave birth to America. In the hands of faithful missionaries it has become the fountain of life that has brought Christ to many tribes and peoples and nations. It lives today, the liveliest thing in all the literature of the world. Its voice can never be stilled for it is the voice of God.

## Chapter 8

### THE MOTHER OF BIBLES

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The influence of the Bible upon the life of the world is simply incalculable. It is impossible to think of any instrumentality developed in any area of human interest that can be compared to it. The invention of printing by movable metallic type five hundred years ago is possibly the most important of all inventions if measured by its influence upon the life of mankind, but we must remember that it has been devotion to the Bible that has reduced most of the languages of the world to written form so that the advantages of printing might be utilized on a worldwide scale.

Underneath almost every worthy creation that influences the modern world you will find the rugged, immovable structure of the Word of God.

A study of the origin of statute law, for instance, reveals this. That the same is true of music and the arts we all well know.

And literature? I hardly dare introduce the subject with the end of the chapter so near. Whoever reads the Bible in his own tongue is seized with the desire to write about it.

The powerful grip of the Word of God cannot be shaken off even by those who do not walk in Christ's way. It fascinates them and inspires them. A friend of mine has recently been collecting titles of modern English books of fiction, drama, and poetry, not written for religious purposes and, for the most part, the creations of authors who make no profession of the Christian faith, to see how many of these titles come from the Bible. Three years ago he had a list of 235. In the summer of 1941 his list had grown to 1,065 of which 254 were quotations or unquestioned adaptations from the words of Jesus.

To be born into the English language is to automatically become an heir to one of the world's chief sources of wealth—the

King James Bible. In this little chapter we shall examine only one of the principal channels of the influence of this great book—the story of how it has become the creative source of so many other Bibles.

Out of the profound change which the open Bible in the hands of the Puritans brought upon the life of England emerged a passion to share the Bible with the rest of the world. This passion took organized shape first in 1701 with the formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The seal adopted by this society is most significant. It shows a Christian minister standing in the prow of a vessel offering the Bible to people on the shore. That Bible is the King James which has since been the inspiration and the literary basis for most of the Bibles that men today read in their own tongues.

Even before 1701 John Eliot, apostle to the Indians of Massachusetts, had, with his King James to guide him, translated the whole Bible into the Algonquin language which he first had to reduce to writing. He completed his colossal task in 1663. It was the first child of the Mother of Bibles—the King James. It was the first Bible printed in America which has since produced hundreds of millions of copies of God's Word and sent them to the ends of the earth. It was the first instance of the translating and printing of a whole Bible in a new language as a means of evangelization, and this has since become the most extensive and transforming enterprise in the history of the literatures of the world.

It was more than a century later, when the new impetus of the Evangelical Revival had widened the horizons of missionary vision in England that the Mother of Bibles found her great opportunity. In 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in London. Its base was as broad as the whole earth. In its formation were Anglicans, Quakers, Baptists, and dissenters of many kinds. Those were days of sharp contention in theological matters but by a seeming miracle of grace this society was founded on the proposition to supply the Bible without note or comment to any man and every man on earth, without respect to his church connection. Anybody could buy it, anybody could use it. Anybody could distribute it.

This was the day of opportunity for the English Bible. In rapid succession following the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society came Bible societies in many other lands. They linked themselves with the new missionary movements that were also enthusiastically emerging in almost every Christian country, to take our Lord's great commission seriously and preach the gospel to every creature. Was there ever a moment so fraught with hope for the world as that one when the English people with their English Bible went out under the irresistible power of missionary zeal to bring the Kingdom in?

Let us look for a moment at this mighty transforming power as it embodied itself in two men. The first was William Carey. He was toiling as a cobbler when his soul was set on fire to take Christ to India. He became a part-time preacher. As he filled his days with shoemaking, teaching, preaching, studying, the conviction grew upon him that he should convert the heathen by giving them the Bible in their native tongues. Though burdened with a heavy family debt, he nevertheless in these preparatory years taught himself French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Carey's career in India is one of the half dozen greatest chapters of Christian history. He labored there for thirty-nine years, never returning to England. He was one of the most versatile men who ever lived. He deserves to be called the father of modern missions because he initiated so many types of work for the bettering of the life of the people. He issued a book on the flora of India. He pointed the way to industrial reform. He helped abolish suttee, infanticide, and other cruelties. But the primary missionary purpose of his going was never dislodged. In his thirty-nine years in India William Carey made or edited thirty-six translations of the Bible, being himself responsible for those in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, and Sanskrit. With his missionary colleagues he founded a press at Serampore from which, in his lifetime, issued two hundred and twelve thousand Bibles and portions of the Bible in nearly forty different languages, Carey himself undertaking most of the literary work. The Serampore press with its group of translators and helpers made the Bible accessible to one third of the people of the world. Seldom

has it ever been given to any man to do so much for his fellow men as did William Carey.

Then let us look at another English lad who was also engaged in the shoemaking trade, being an apprentice to his father who made wooden lasts for shaping leather shoes. He was Robert Morrison. God early tied his eager heart to China which in those days was a nation with a closed door and was eight months' of sea travel from England. The strict prohibition against preaching Christianity forced Morrison into the literary field. He set himself to master one of the hardest languages in the world—but the language that one quarter of the world speaks. In two years he had become so proficient that he was appointed by the East India Company as their translator. He then prepared a grammar and an English-Chinese lexicon. After sixteen years of toil he published a dictionary containing forty thousand words. Fifteen years after he landed in Canton, Robert Morrison completed and issued his Bible in Chinese although he had been told that such a thing was utterly impossible. Morrison like Carey was more than a translator. He instituted a system of colportage for the distribution of the Bible. He prepared a commentary on the Bible. He started a college for the training of Bible teachers. He even established a medical dispensary. The story of the Bible's spread among the Chinese people is one of the great stories of the Kingdom which we cannot even touch upon here. China is today the greatest consumer of Scripture volumes of any nation on earth and her rulers have accepted the Bible as the basis of all their work. China can never meet the debt she owes to Robert Morrison who came to her with his English Bible in 1807.

Let us shift the scene once more, this time to Madagascar, the next to largest island in the world. In 1935 the 3,300 Protestant churches there celebrated the centenary of the completion of the translation of the Bible in their native language called Malagasy. And well they might, for Madagascar is the scene of one of the Bible's most dramatic demonstrations of its power. In 1818 the London Missionary Society sent two missionaries there with their families. In six weeks they were all dead except one, David Jones. He fled to Mauritius tortured with fever. A second entrance with new missionary recruits in 1820 was more

successful. King Radama favored Christianity. A written language was created and a very fair beginning was made toward the translation of the Bible when the good king died and an evil queen succeeded him. She set herself to drive Christianity into the sea. Christian worship was prohibited on pain of death and even the possession of Christian books was made a capital offense. When the crushing edict fell, the minor prophets and some other sections of the Old Testament had still to be translated. The missionaries were ordered to leave the island before a specified date.

A brief extension of the time limit for the missionaries came about through the action of the Malagasy queen herself. She had once had a bar of soap presented to her, and she was anxious to have more and, as one or two of the missionaries had some knowledge of chemistry, she allowed them to remain long enough to manufacture an adequate supply. Then followed some exciting days for this little band of missionaries. Some devoted themselves to the completion of the translating; others set up the type and worked the heavy, old-fashioned press; others stitched the sheets and fastened on the bindings. By June the first bound copy of the complete Bible was finished, and before the missionaries left the island in July, they had completed seventy copies of the whole Bible and some hundreds of copies of the New Testament and shorter portions.

For twenty-five long years these seventy Bibles and other volumes proved the only guide in Christian living the Malagasy believers had. Since the possession of the books was forbidden, the people hid them in their rice pits or in caves or hollow trees. Others took their books to pieces for greater safety, and distributed the separate sheets among several friends. In some cases, the books were discovered by the queen's spies, and their owners were speared to death or cast from the Hurling Rocks. Many were driven to hide in the mountains. Others, more daring, moved about from place to place. Sometimes they gathered together in a remote spot and read to one another from the precious book. They had no missionaries to whom to turn. They had only the printed Word.

Then the queen died. At the beginning of her reign there

were a thousand Christians. One authority states that not less than ten thousand had been sentenced to death, slavery or exile during the twenty-five years of persecution. But at the end there were seven thousand believers! When the reign of terror had passed, so the story runs, and the first consignment of Bibles, long stored in Mauritius against the day when the doors should open again, were put on sale at the capital city, so great a crowd pressed forward to buy them, that the doors of the storehouse had to be closed and the books handed out through a window.

These are but four of the stories of Bibles born of faith engendered by the King James version. These and hundreds more are colored by the sublime thought and imagery that shaped the minds of English-speaking missionaries.

Among the displays which anyone can see as he enters the American Bible Society's headquarters in New York is a chart on which are listed the names of the 1,051 languages into which the Scriptures have been translated. Most of the names are unfamiliar and seemingly unpronounceable. There is an average of twenty-seven under each letter of the alphabet from A to Z. The large majority of these translations have been made by men and women who took to their task, as the chief help in their work the King James English Bible—the Mother of Bibles. There is no other book in any language with a record faintly comparable to it.

Chapter 9

FREEDOM'S TEXTBOOK

The most important books in a nation's life are its textbooks. If any books may be said to make a nation, its textbooks are the ones. They do more than teach the rudiments of mental practice and store the growing mind with facts. They mold the moral concepts of the rising generation and thus give form to the spirit of the nation that is to be.

Whenever we speak of the origins of our American nation we should go back not one hundred and fifty years to the adoption of our Constitution but three hundred years to the founding of the colonies. By far the most powerful influence in the founding of those colonies was Puritanism. With all its faults, most of which it has long since cast off, Puritanism still stands today in the van of all that promises the best for the future of our nation. And the chief textbook of Puritanism has always been the Bible.

The Bible was the dominant influence in the founding of the educational system of the American colonies. As early as 1642, schools were established by law in Massachusetts and before that instruction had been conscientiously given first in the homes and later in the ministers' houses. And always and everywhere, both in private and public schools, the Bible was the chief textbook.

I wonder if there ever was a single book that played so large a part in the life of any nation as that played by what was called the *New England Primer*. It was used extensively in the elementary schools of all the American colonies for more than one hundred years before, and to some extent, after the Revolutionary War. From it the children learned the alphabet, spelling, reading, and of course an immense amount of religious teaching. Pedagogy was different in those days from the highly developed forms that mold our twentieth century education, but it was

plain to see that the inculcation of Bible information and Bible doctrine was paramount. In the *New England Primer* the simple rhyme was used as an aid to memory. Thus we find under the letter A

In Adam's fall
We sinned all.

and for the letter Z we read

Zacchaeus he
Did climb a tree
Our Lord to see.

It was from this primer too, that generations have learned that prayer that has been taught more people, I suppose, than any except the Lord's Prayer:

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

I cannot overstress the significance of this *New England Primer* in the early life of America. It is estimated that during the one hundred and fifty years of our colonial history, no less than three million copies of it were sold and used. This is unparalleled especially when one remembers how sparse was the population during those years.

The whole purpose of early American education was that the Bible might be better known. This extended to higher education as well as elementary. Of the ten colleges founded before the outbreak of the Revolution that continue to this day, nine of them, Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, Princeton, Washington and Lee, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth, began with faculties composed of theologians whose main purpose was to give adequate training to ministers of the gospel. The tenth in this list of colleges, the University of Pennsylvania, although

without denominational origin grew out of a charity school founded by George Whitfield, one of the world's most renowned Bible evangelists.

During the days of the Constitutional Convention, called for the purpose of forming the thirteen colonies into a single nation, there were sharp controversies over many points and at times it looked as though the hopes for a federal government would never be realized, but there was at no time any difference of opinion on the fundamental doctrines of democracy which five generations of colonists had learned from their Bibles. Whether he were a conventional churchman or not, every delegate to that convention believed that there was a supreme value to the life of every individual, and that every human soul was regarded as infinitely precious to his Creator and that there is a way for men to express their individual sovereignty and develop their priceless worth through common action. It was these convictions derived directly from the teachings of the Bible that offered the common ground on which our nation with its love of peace and equality was founded. It is not surprising to read that one of the very earliest acts of Congress was to approve the printing of a large edition of the Bible and officially recommend it to the people of the land. Little wonder, too, that there sprang up very early in the nation's life the Bible society movement whose sole purpose it was to make the Bible immediately available to every household in the rapidly expanding country. Little wonder too that there sprang up all over the country, as the caravans moved westward through the Mississippi Valley, church-sponsored academies and colleges whose main purpose was again to develop a well-grounded Christian leadership.

And, it would be wearisome reading if we listed here the names of the hundreds and hundreds of institutions, founded through the years here in our beloved America, that are expressions of the fundamental convictions upon which our nation stands— institutions whose aim it is to foster equal opportunity for all, understanding between groups of varying origins, international and inter-racial movements and the like, that in every case were established to perpetuate the precious privileges of human freedom that make America what she is.

I deplore the condition of the Negro in America as much as any man, but of this I am sure, there are some countries on earth where his lot today might be much worse than here with us where from the beginning the Bible has been our textbook of freedom.

I am sure the end of the making of books is farther off in these United States than in any land on earth and yet the Bible, America's first textbook is still the most important of them all.

Men have tried every conceivable device to attain freedom. Possibly their earliest hopes lay in migration. More often they have sought freedom through warfare, and at other times through statecraft.

After millenniums of this struggle most men today are not yet free. Warfare always enslaves men. Poverty enslaves men. More than half the two thousand million people on the earth are the slaves of poverty. Ignorance enslaves men, for their most glorious gift—the human mind—is shackled.

Out of all these houses of bondage that circle the globe today anxious eyes are on America for America seems still to be gloriously free.

And why all this? Because America has more than half the world's gold? No, something deeper than that. Because America could become economically self-sufficient if she needed to without any great dislocation of her people's standards of living? Well, that is a little nearer to it. Because America has an industrial plant of unrivaled proportions, manned by an intelligent, aspiring citizenry who seem capable of achieving any goal that a modern mechanized world may demand in peace or war? Yes, that is getting a little closer to the answer still. But we can probe deeper.

The peoples of the world pin their hopes on America, or stand in fear of America as the case may be, because her people are the freest people in the world. There may be sixty families that wield great influence in the United States but they do not control it. There is injustice aplenty and much has still to be done before America becomes perfect, but when all allowances are made, I verily believe that in America today the lad from the

back street has as good a chance to make the top rung of the ladder as he has ever had in American life.

As the land of the free, the United States is unique. And why? Because she has more territory stocked with a better assortment of climates and natural resources? The answer is no, because there are at least three other nations in the world comparable in all these respects. Is it, then, because she belongs to the New World and made her start at the time when Europe, under the stimulus of the French Revolution, was clamoring for "liberty, equality, fraternity"? And the answer again is no, for there are exactly a score of other New World nations with much the same opportunity, but which in no single case cradle the hopes of the world as the United States does.

The answer is just a step further on. Let us get at it this way. Fifty-three years ago in commemoration of the centenary of American independence France presented our country with our most famous piece of sculpture, the Statue of Liberty. It is probably the most effective symbol of a spiritual reality in all the Western world. More lofty hopes and aspirations have been raised, more honest tears of joy have been shed, by those who looked upon this statue for the first time than can be said of any other memorial or monument in all the world.

When Thomas R. Marshall was Vice-President, he made a public statement about the Statue of Liberty which brings into focus the answer we are seeking. Said Mr. Marshall, "If I were to have my way, I would take the torch out of the hand of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor and, in its stead, place an open Bible."

After all, a torch is but a symbol. It was not actual physical light that brought liberty. It was some sort of an inner light. And, yes, quite true, the open Bible is only a symbol, for it must be read and read with eager interest to be of practical use. But the Bible is the truer symbol of American liberty for it suggests the shedding of an inner spiritual light, the truths on which the American colonies from the beginning tried to build their new governments. It is what men believe that makes them free! A nation may have unlimited natural resources and the best climate in the world but if its people believe that might makes right,

that one race is endowed with superior rights over other races, that some persons are born to rule and others to be ruled, if these are their master beliefs, then such men will never find the truth that makes them free. Deeper still, if a nation is peaceable, tolerant, and considerate of the lot of the common man but demands that religion shall be cast in certain molds, here again there can be no freedom like the freedom we know in America.

I would not be so foolish as to suppose that the open Bible alone achieved America's high estate of freedom. But I do think that it stands nearer to the center of America's present power and position than any single objective reality one can point to.

It is easy for us to lampoon the Puritans of New England for the severity with which they forced the Bible upon their children. Modern pedagogy would not tolerate the narrowness of the *New England Primer*. But I wonder if there is any other book or set of books that could have made America what she is. It grounded in our nation's life certain convictions that have never changed. Because, like no other nation, America was nurtured on this book for five generations before she attained her political freedom, she has weathered storms both within and without that might easily have spelled her ruin.

I believe that America is what she is because of what she studied in her early days.

Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God
Came with those exiles o'er the waves;
And where their pilgrim feet have trod,
The God they trusted guards their graves.

Chapter 10

A NATION DISCOVERS THE TRUTH

Off the coast of Europe, far to the north in the Atlantic Ocean, lies a group of about five thousand fog-swept islands, two of which are the most important islands in the world. Together these two islands are divided into four realms, England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. England alone, occupying the southern part of the larger island covers but one eight hundred and fiftieth of the world's surface yet she dominates the life on nearly one fourth of it. The language of the English people has in recent years become the first language of mankind, spoken, it is claimed, by six hundred million people though there are but a scant sixty million living in England itself.

Here is a phenomenon that calls for explanation. Queen Victoria once explained it very briefly. A chieftain from one of her distant possessions, amazed at the power and resources of England asked, "Is there any one thing that is the explanation of it all?" The great Queen answered, "Yes, there is one thing. It is the Bible."

The story of how the Bible has made England is a story that, sketchily told, revolves principally around five determinative personalities, a great pope, a great king, a great scholar, a great liberator, and a great preacher.

The great pope was Gregory. He it was who, struck with the beautiful faces of the fair-haired English slaves in the Roman market, sent a band of forty monks to commend Christ to these heathen islanders. It was in the spring of the year 597 that Gregory's missionaries, after a year of travel across Europe, appeared on the little island of Thanet, off the coast of Kent, seeking an audience with Ethelbert, king of that region, to convert him. A few days after their landing at Thanet, the Pope's messengers were granted an interview with the king. Along

with other paraphernalia of their faith, they brought a library of books. Books meant nothing to the English of that day for they did not know what a book was. These books were in Latin, and there were nine of them. Of the nine, six were the Bible and nothing but the Bible. The other three were closely related to the Bible.

The settlement of Gregory's monks at Canterbury, the conversion of Ethelbert, the apostasy under his successor, the ups and downs in the battle between Christianity and the heathen religion of the Angles make the story of the seventh century one of the great tales of missionary conquest. At its close we find England professedly a Christian land peopled with rough, illiterate shepherds and herdsmen-fighters all of whom, however, were ready to listen to the cowherd Caedmon as he sang his stories of creation and of Christ the hero of the Cross, ready to chant with Aldhelm from his first English Psalter and ready to listen with eager joy as Cuthbert expounded the gospel. We are not forgetting what Ireland did for England in these early days, for Christianity had entered Ireland, as, indeed, it had entered England, once long before, but in Ireland it had never died out, and in the seventh century Ireland added her missionaries to those of Rome to help make England a land of the Bible. The first credit however must go to Gregory the Great who sent his forty monks with six Bibles to a Bibleless England. Just as everywhere, the Bible did not weaken England. It took hold of her potential strength and transformed it from terror to moral grandeur. It brought her disunity to attention before the tribunal of the common good and organized her into a nation with an ardent faith that from that day to this has never faltered.

The great king was Alfred, who came to the throne almost three hundred years after Gregory had given England her Bible. Possibly the oftenest quoted passage from Alfred's works is this, "My will was to live worthily as long as I lived and after my life to leave to them that should come after, my memory in good works." Of all the good works which Alfred left none surpassed his rebuilding of the English code of laws which he did squarely upon the Bible. The King's code opens with the Ten Commandments. These are followed by extracts from the Book of

Exodus and the teachings of Jesus. The introductory portion of the code closes with the Golden Rule. "From this one doom, or law," Alfred himself comments, "a man may bethink him how he should judge every one rightly. He needs no other doom book."

The influence upon England's way of doing things that stems from the Christian conception of law introduced by Alfred the Great is simply immeasurable. England is no paragon of perfection among the nations, but if you would know why England, once she had lost her American colonies, turned around to be their friend, why England has, in spite of her cruel imperialisms, none the less lifted rather than debased those peoples she has ruled, if you would know why England has produced a succession of men like William Penn, Lord Shaftesbury, Edmund Burke, William Wilberforce, John Howard, William E. Gladstone, and a hundred others like them, you must remember that Alfred the Great built the Bible into English law and gave birth to the idea that to be a statesman was to be a servant and to rule was to find out what the people needed and to see that they got it.

The third man to give England the Bible was a great scholar, William Tyndale. Of course he was more than a scholar but, had he not been a scholar, all his reformer's zeal and his amazing practicality would have been of no avail. John Wycliffe had, indeed, given the English the Bible in their own tongue and we should not belittle his great work. But it was William Tyndale, of whom we have spoken at greater length in an earlier chapter of this little series, whose consummate skill as a linguist and whose complete dedication to the noble project, produced not only the first Scripture translated in English in quantities, but did it so well that he set a standard for English expression that may truly be said to have given to the world the English tongue in all its beauty. When we read the New Testament today in the King James version, it is virtually in the language as Tyndale expressed it more than four hundred years ago. It has endured because William Tyndale was a linguistic scholar of the first order and was determined that the translation should be popu-

lar and not literary, speaking the language of the common people.

The fourth in my list of men who gave England her Bible was the one I call the great liberator—Oliver Cromwell. In our sketch he must symbolize the Puritans. Puritan he was and England made him their absolute monarch for nine years. No man has been more diversely characterized. Until Carlyle interpreted him, Cromwell was regarded as “a brave, bad man, with all the wickedness for which hell-fire is prepared.” Let us recall, however, that Cromwell might have been king but he refused; Cromwell might have exploited the people but he never did. Sir John Fortescue, his latest biographer says of Cromwell that it is from him we derive the great tradition that an army marching through a country must take nothing without payment. He lived in times that were crude and rough and we must judge him by his times. He lived by the Bible, the whole of it, the Old Testament as well as the New, the imprecatory Psalms as well as the Psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Before he called his first session of the Parliament he brooded on the one hundred and third Psalm. The night before he summoned the second, he studied the eighty-fifth Psalm and opened the session with an exposition of it. His soldiers went into battle chanting Psalms.

The test of what I am contending for in Oliver Cromwell is found in the well-known story of the return of Charles II. The Protectorate was over. Cromwell left no successor. The people were tired of Puritanism's excesses. They were ready for a king again. Charles landed at Dover. The first official act of his return was to hand the King a Bible for the Bible was to England by the end of Cromwell's rule the banner of their liberties. The Puritans had contended for this from the start. Tens of thousands of them had, to use the language of James I, “been harried out of the land” for their contention. Cromwell had established their claim in the seat of the government of England and it has never been dislodged.

Though the avowal by Charles II of his love for the Bible made that day proved a sorry jest, there grew out of that incident the conviction which in time made the English kings mere

symbols of the power which the people themselves possessed. An open Bible had produced the Puritans, the Puritans had produced Cromwell, and Cromwell had laid the basis for English democracy for which the nation fights today.

And finally the Bible went far deeper into English life through the work of England's greatest preacher—John Wesley. By the middle of the eighteenth century, England had become a great populous, industrialized nation. The State Church was predominant, but it was cold. Nobody was interested in the Bible. God was being crowded out of men's lives by the current philosophies. Although trained for the Christian ministry and, indeed, after serving a short term as a missionary in Georgia, John Wesley was roundly converted in 1738 and entered upon a career of fifty years as an evangelist and religious organizer, which has no equal in Christian history. Behind it all was a devotion to the Bible which in Oxford days had given Wesley the nickname of "Bible Eater." Out of it came, along with the founding of the Methodist Church and other enduring Christian movements, two organizations that have had an immeasurable effect upon the course of English life and indeed upon the whole world. The first was the development of the Sunday school movement which immensely popularized the use of the Bible in England and has probably done more to spread a knowledge of the book throughout the world than any movement ever conceived within the Christian church. The second was the founding in 1804 of the British and Foreign Bible Society established for the express purpose of making the Bible available to every man in Britain, no matter what dialect he spoke and no matter how little he could pay. England was just then, in 1804, fighting for her life as she is today. Napoleon was waiting for his "six hours' mastery" of the channel. But troubled times had no terrors for those who were under the spell of the Evangelical Revival. The British and Foreign Bible Society was launched and became the pattern for other Bible societies that have since distributed throughout the world, over one billion volumes of Scripture and are in the thick of the battle today in almost every land on earth determined that God's Word shall shine on in the darkness.

England? One cannot explain England apart from the Bible.

She has had it now since that spring day in 597—1,344 years. Upon it has been built her great church structure. Upon it has been built her educational system of which we have had no time to speak. At its fount of wisdom, beauty, and grace, have feasted her poets, her artists, her philosophers. Her statesmen and her reformers have found their guidance in its pages. Long centuries ago when she was a far off little savage nation she discovered the truth in the Bible. Today she stands unrivaled in her power and in her gifts to men. And why? The Bible is as Queen Victoria once said, "The secret of England's greatness."

Chapter 11

A NATION IS BORN OF THE TRUTH

Of course we mean America! America as we know her and love her did not just happen. She has a definite heritage and the most honored pedigree of any nation on earth. America was born in the hearts of the Pilgrim fathers.

America's real birthday is November 11. No, it has nothing to do with Armistice Day. I have been seriously concerned about November 11 for the past two years. How can we celebrate November 11 any longer as Armistice Day? Since France surrendered to Germany in 1940 and the formalities of that capitulation were carried out in the same railway coach that saw the surrender of Germany in 1918, all the meaning of Armistice Day has been dissipated. I think we had better forget Armistice Day. But not November 11! For it was on that day in 1620, according to the old-fashioned calendar, that something happened aboard the "Mayflower" as she lay at anchor in Cape Cod Bay that has changed the course of history. This little party of one hundred and two persons of whom forty-three were adult males was unlike any of the other groups that had come to these shores. They had no charter from any king. When they should land in the following days nobody would have any authority. So the forty-three men of the company were called together in the cabin of that famous little vessel to face the facts. If there was no government to which they were responsible, they would create a government *de novo*. If the pen ever proved itself mightier than the sword, it did that day.

I think that every school child in America should be instructed concerning the document drawn up on November 11, 1620. It contains but two hundred and three words. It begins with this ascription, "In the name of God, Amen." The next sentence contains the phrases "by the grace of God" and "for the glory of

God and the advancement of the Christian Faith." Further on it states that the agreement is made in the presence of God and for the purpose of enacting just and equal laws which shall be for the general good of the colony.

It is most significant that there was no great difference of opinion about the tenor of this document. Subsequent events reveal the hearty accord with which it was signed. Where did the unity come from? It came from the Bible. These forty-three men knew little but the Bible. Nor was it a mere academic interest with them. The Bible was literally God's Word to them and God's Word was law. The two hundred and three words they wrote that day formed a bridge over which they hoped to carry the laws of God into the structure of a new type of community. That they did it with success, what ensued amply attests, for there followed the Pilgrims in the next few years thousands upon thousands of the persecuted from all over western Europe and the leaders among them were invariably those whose devotion to the plain teachings of the Bible had brought down the wrath of their governments upon them. They are our spiritual fathers—Presbyterians, Quakers, Huguenots, Moravians, the Reformed, Mennonites, Schwenkfelders, Baptists, Lutherans, yes, and Roman Catholics. In many respects they were very different from one another. In one respect they were all alike. They had read their own Bibles and were determined that they should find a way to build their common life upon the Word of God.

Why did all this happen just when it did? There were of course many causes, but it is interesting to note that not by any means the least of these causes was the invention of printing. Before printing there were few books in Europe. Without books the people were illiterate, ignorant, and superstitious. But even before printing, the Bible had enjoyed a remarkable circulation. It belonged to no one nation in particular and was already twelve centuries old when printing came in. Although before the middle of the sixteenth century, the Bible was little read, the people of culture in every country did know something of it. Naturally, it was the first book of any importance to be printed. Because it was by nature every man's book, the sixteenth century found printed copies of the Bible, now available at moderate cost,

spreading like the rays of the sun over an awakening Europe. The Renaissance was on. The Reformation had begun. A continent was being reborn and, in its new life, the Bible, in the hands of the people, exercised possibly the greatest power for change of any single force. In his *Short History of the English People*, the great historian Green says of these days that in them, "England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. . . . The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

All of this was sure to make trouble, for Europe was dominated by a group of nations where the state and the church were deeply entrenched and in no mood to accept new social philosophies.

As fast as people who had read their own Bible accepted its teachings and began to act upon their beliefs, they were met by fierce opposition. Thus thousands had to choose between persecution and America.

Thus was a nation born of a book. Once on these shores where they were free to worship God according to their own interpretation of the Bible, what did our Colonial fathers do? Reduced to its lowest terms they did three things, they built a state, a school, and a church. How refreshingly new were the features of their statecraft. Fourteen years after the landing of the Pilgrims, the men of the Massachusetts Colony were casting secret written ballots for a governor. Five years later the free men of Connecticut gathered at Hartford and adopted the first written constitution known in human history which created a government. The sovereignty of the individual, which to the Puritan mind was the golden thread of freedom that ran through all of the Scriptures, was to be the basis of all statehood.

Let us see how this has worked out in our nation's life: One of our American principles is that we abide by the decision of the majority. We have been practicing this from the beginning with very little serious tension and only one period, of civil strife. And how? Has the majority forced its opinion upon the minority at the point of a gun? It has not. One of the marvels of America's life has been that the minority has trusted the majority not to abuse its opportunity and the majority has ac-

corded to the minority the right to agitate its losing cause. In a sense this is the political glory of America.

Well now, when men act like that and you track their motives down into their hearts, you find what? You find a high measure of mutual trust which expresses itself in forbearance, patience, self-control, and a decent respect for one's neighbor. So far from this attitude's being an infringement of the liberty of the man who takes it, it is the evidence that his sense of human freedom is of the highest. For human freedom is something more than a man's possession of his own rights. It stands upon a lively recognition of the rights of others which must be as stoutly fought for as his own.

And where did these ideas come from? They came from that old book out of which practically all of the fundamental beliefs of Americans had been derived—the Bible.

In an earlier chapter we have spoken about the unrivaled place which the Bible held as the nation's textbook of freedom. It dominated American education, from the kindergarten to the university.

Behind both the state and the school lay the church. Of course one could only be a voter who belonged to the church. And, of course, the whole of Sunday must be given to the church for sermons two hours long, morning, afternoon, and evening. The church was the powerhouse of faith and practice. Without the instruction from the pulpit and the inspiration of worship all else the Puritan did would collapse.

Then came the Revolution with the political birth of the United States of America. Our children are taught something about the Declaration of Independence. But how much, I wonder, about its origin? The historians tell us that Thomas Jefferson was chosen to draw up this important document because of his ability to write clear, forceful, beautiful English. And where did he learn this felicity of expression? By much literary study, of course, but not without years of reading of the New Testament which he mastered in Greek, Latin, French, and English in order to compile a collection of excerpts covering the life and teachings of Jesus. Originally, Jefferson had intended these for use in teaching the Indians. As it turned out he used them for

the culture of his own soul. To my mind, the Declaration of Independence is one of those creations of men that is more than a mere expression of a man's interest and intelligence. It belongs to the little list of documents in the world that will never die because they are portraits of men's souls just as we regard great works of art and music like Raphael's "Madonna" or Handel's "Messiah."

One of the most revealing moments in the discussions leading to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence was when one of the delegates complained that the document had no originality in it. To this observation Mr. Jefferson arose and said that he did not consider that he was expected to invent any new ideas. He was simply to put in appropriate phrases the convictions that had led to the Revolution. How everlastingly right he was. He belonged to the latest of several generations of people whose thoughts in all serious matters had been channeled by the great pronouncements of Holy Writ. No, these convictions about men being created equal and endowed by God with certain inalienable rights had been discussed time and time again in the Continental Congress and in the Colonial Assemblies and in the town meetings and on and on back to the very days when, in the sixteenth century, Englishmen first began to read the Bible in their own tongue.

In early American life the Bible was regarded as one of the prime requisites of every home. When a scarcity of Bibles appeared, one of the first acts of the new Congress was to authorize the printing of an American edition. Before 1800, ten other editions had appeared and the Bible took its place as America's best seller, a place it has never relinquished to this day.

One of the most successful movements in the infant nation during the early decades of the new century was the establishing in every state of what were known as Bible societies. The country was expanding rapidly. Many of the people were poor immigrants without Bibles. The Bible society movement sprang from the conviction that there should never be a home in the land without a Bible. The American Bible Society, founded in 1816, now the parent organization with which practically all of the local societies have worked through the years, constitutes, in my

opinion, one of the purest expressions of American patriotism of any movement or group in our country. Not considering for the moment its work in almost fifty other nations, it has devoted itself to the purpose of supplying the Scriptures, without note or comment and without purpose of profit to every man in the United States, in any language he requires, and at any price he can pay. In 1940, the society distributed 3,772,559 volumes in the United States in seventy-eight different languages.

Joseph Choate once indulged in a generalization which comes nearer to being right than most. He said, "The Bible made New England and New England made America."

Woodrow Wilson once declared, "America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelation of Holy Scripture."

And Calvin Coolidge sounded a note of warning when he said, "The foundation of society and of our government rests so much on the teachings of the Bible, that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings should cease to be practically universal in our country."

Chapter 12

A NATION GROPES FOR THE TRUTH

As an antidote for the depressing effect of reading war news from Europe, I read all I can about China. Yes, of course, I know that China is at war too, and some phases of the war in China are more terrible than anything that has yet happened in Europe. But there is one thing about the situation in China that is fundamentally different. It resembles what went on in the American colonies during our Revolutionary War. While the battles were raging, and the odds seemed to be against the invaded colonies, they were, nevertheless, writing their Declaration of Independence and otherwise confidently building a new nation wherein democracy with its liberties, its faith in the common man, its concern for public welfare, should be established among them.

There is but one adequate explanation for the seemingly miraculous success of our Revolutionary fathers, and that was their grounding in the Bible, upon whose teachings they had built their whole life—social, political, cultural, and legal. The analogy between America and the new China holds here as well. Unquestionably, the Bible is the great propelling, unifying, and stabilizing force in the making of the new China.

To understand China today, one must know something about her ruler, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his radiant wife Soong Mei-ling. They are ardent Christians, who, in spite of the crushing duties that press upon them, spend an hour every day in the reading and study of their Bibles.

Immediately upon their assumption of authority, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang inaugurated, for the development of their nation, what is known as the New Life Movement. That it is Christian to the core is indicated by the following state-

ment which Generalissimo Chiang included in a recent broadcast to the nation:

... If we are really going to practice the new method of living, not only must we have a new spirit: we must have a new life. This new life must have Jesus' spirit of universal love, and his determination to sacrifice himself. ... My fellow countrymen, let us go bravely with him to the cross, to seek the everlasting peace of mankind and the renewal of our nation in China.

But the New Life Movement in China is something more than a beautiful ideal cherished by the head of the government. It is shared widely in many high official circles. One of the secretaries of the China Bible House in Shanghai writes in June, 1940:

Literally everyone seems eager for the Bible. By appointment I called on a former Minister of Foreign Affairs. He reminded me that four years ago, at a most critical time in national affairs, the Secretary of the Bible Society had called on him in Nanking and, through the generosity of an American friend, presented him with a Bible. "From that day to this," he said, "I have read from that Bible every day." [My correspondent continues]: I met a missionary who had been released for two years to assist in a government office. He told me of his great surprise . . . to learn how many of the high officials, who bear heavy responsibilities, make it their regular habit to read their Bibles and pray, "and," he added, "they have no hesitation in saying openly that they depend much on these periods of quiet devotion for the strength and wisdom to discharge their tasks."

Probably the most significant and promising factor in this insistent demand, however, is the zeal with which the tens of thousands of students, mostly non-Christian, in the so-called refugee universities in Free China are clamoring for the Bible. The average sale of whole Bibles in China from 1936 to 1938

was about 72,500. In 1939 this figure jumped to 138,000 and in 1940 was 136,000, but these larger figures do not adequately reflect the demand. For the last six months of 1939 the presses in Shanghai were producing a Bible or a New Testament every two minutes, day and night; and yet, at the end of the year, the demand so far exceeded the ability to produce the books, that orders for 35,000 volumes, mostly for students, had to be canceled.

Anything statistical that one says about China as a whole, to be significant, must be stated in figures that are at least mildly astronomical, for China has a population of 457,000,000. Here are, then, impressive figures. In the last seven years the Bible societies have sold in China 51,078,897 Scripture volumes. This is 27 per cent of all the Bibles or parts of Bibles sold in the whole world in that period. To be sure, the great majority of the books sold in China are Gospel portions—but a Gospel portion to the average Chinese, even sold at less than cost as most of them are, is an expensive book. And, by the way, let us spike at once the base slander that the Chinese accepts the Bible and professes an interest in the Saviour it offers, that his rice bowl might be kept full. The Chinese are paying for their Bibles, and veritably wearing them out with much use. It is a fair assumption that, volume for volume, the Scriptures are read oftener and with deeper intent in China than in the United States.

The eager interest in the Bible in Free China is reflected in a recent letter from Secretary T. H. Lin, who represents the China Bible House in the provisional capital of Chungking:

Before an air-raid warning one morning I was happy that one hundred packages of Bibles had been sent off to the post office. From 10:30 that morning until 3 p.m. the next day I spent in the dugout. For six successive days bombs dropped about us. Our building was damaged. The show windows were completely ruined. Three times my coolie and I repaired our damaged roof. But we stuck to our posts, for the demand for Bibles ever increased. One letter brought a check for \$28 and requested ten Bibles immediately. After one raid a man

came in the evening to get fifty copies. A student called for ten Testaments in English. A Chinese business man came to see if the raid had ruined the Bibles, and bought one hundred copies for his friends. After the heaviest bombing of all a Chinese gentleman called and ordered \$500 worth of Bibles. Another placed an order for \$100. So you see, with us it is business as usual. We are closing our day with a cheerful heart.

There is still another side to this story that must not be overlooked. China, although the most illiterate of all the great peoples of the earth is, in the historic sense, the most literary.

In the British Museum one is shown a Chinese encyclopedia bound in a thousand volumes. Some of China's classics take us back to the days of Abraham. In China, respect for printed paper is almost a religion. The art of printing was practiced in China five centuries before it was adopted in Europe. From the dim past the man of letters has held the highest rank in China's society. There is no nation on earth with so long a record of literary activity.

Among the far-reaching changes that are taking place in China today are various movements designed to encourage literacy. As Dante made the dialect of Tuscany become the language of Italy, as Luther caused central German to become the accepted speech for the whole country, and as Chaucer and Wycliffe helped to make the Midland dialect into modern English, so developments have been taking place in China toward a national language.

There is one language that is understood with more or less facility over nine tenths of China. It has commonly been called Mandarin. The official name today is Kuo-yü which means "national language." The wide distribution of the Bible in this language spoken by so many of China's people is not the least of the forces that are lifting China out of illiteracy.

China's literary problem has been further complicated by her form of writing. Hitherto there has been no phonetic alphabet. Every Chinese word had a character of its own. There are approximately forty thousand different characters in the Chinese dictionary. To know six to seven thousand of them was to be a

well-educated man. In recent years there has been developed a phonetic alphabet of thirty-nine characters into which the books of the Bible have been gradually appearing in diglot form. It is expected that the complete Bible in this "national phonetic" will appear in 1941.

We owe to Dr. Hu Shih, China's present ambassador at Washington, more than to anyone else, the success of the modern literary revival in China. And we owe to the heroic missionaries who have stuck to their posts during these last frightful years, the honored place which the Bible holds in that revival. The old China looked down upon books written by Christians. Now there are quite a number of Christian books that have won recognition in the highest literary circles. Still more significant is the fact that non-Christian writers are using the Bible. The best known dramatist in China has recently written a play called "Sunrise" in which he quotes several passages from the Old and New Testaments in a sort of introduction to the play. Likewise China's foremost novelist has recently written a book entitled *New Life* which contains three historical short stories, the first of which is about Jesus. Biblical phrases and allusions appear continually in newspapers and magazines. No one can tell what will happen to a country when its literary men become Bible conscious. They may, only a very few of them, if they be giants, swing open the widest door through which China will march to a nationwide acceptance of the Christian faith!

Meanwhile those who are responsible for publishing and distributing the Bible in China are struggling to match their wits and their resources with the glorious opportunity. Two years ago they developed a miniature-size Bible with clear type and last year a still smaller New Testament. These books were designed to reduce not only the cost of publication but also the enormous transportation charges now required.

Transportation reports regarding Bibles in China now speak in terms of tons. On July 23, 1941, two trucks arrived at Kunming with five tons of Bibles, having successfully traversed the world's most famous and most dangerous highway—the Burma Road. Another ton of Bibles has been sent by plane to a section of Free China which has long been cut off from its

supply. An additional twelve tons of Scriptures have been sent west through the lines during the spring of 1941.

What may prove more important still is that molds for making plates from which to print the Old Testament came along with the tons of Bibles over the Burma Road to Chengtu so that it will now be possible to print the whole Bible in Free China should it prove necessary. "Shells" for printing the Bible have also been deposited at both Manila and Rangoon to meet eventualities.

China is groping for the truth. She is finding it in the Bible. Although less than one per cent of her vast population have probably ever read a line of the Bible, the interest in the Bible in her government circles, among her students and many of her literary leaders is making the great book a major factor in molding the nation's life.

Is it wishful thinking to suppose that someday China with her four hundred and fifty-seven million people will join England and America with their two hundred million more to preserve and popularize democracy for all the world? At all events it is worth striving for. Every effort, however, will be in vain unless China, like England and America, makes the Bible her own on a national scale. Christian statesmanship in this strategic hour clearly calls for giving the Bible to China.

SERIES III

The Positive Answer to the World's Despair

Chapter 13

BORING THROUGH MOUNTAINS

A few months ago I sat in a little group of men who were discussing the outline and the content of an important religious document they were to prepare. One of the men was a Chinese, and a layman. His familiarity with the Bible and his convictions regarding the sovereignty of God, the importance of spiritual values, and the establishing of right relations with one's fellow men, were an amazement to me. The foremost American preacher or theological professor could not have expressed them better. Yet, why should I not have expected this from a Chinese?

I wonder if my listeners have had my experience. As a boy, whenever I heard someone speaking in a foreign tongue, I all but took for granted that the foreigner was an ignorant person. His speech aroused in me almost everything but respect. It wasn't hard for me to feel even a sense of enmity toward the man, when there was really no ground for it at all.

I am glad I no longer feel that way toward persons speaking foreign tongues; but this attitude that I had as a boy persists with many people, and is one of the principal causes of the world's despair in this mad hour of wars and threats of war. The differences of religions, customs, languages, modes of thought; the inherited and indoctrinated racial hatreds developed on a national scale have had more to do with creating our present holocaust of hatred than almost anything I know of.

If we are to find a positive answer to the world's despair, it must be one that bores through these mountainous obstacles of national and racial difference, so that multitudes of people may come to feel about men of other races and nations as I am happy to be able to testify that I do about my Chinese friend.

The Bible has through many centuries amply demonstrated

its fitness to do this very thing. The most striking evidence of this in recent days was the gathering held in a suburb of Madras, India, in December of 1938, which was attended by four hundred and seventy-one delegates of Christian churches from sixty-nine different countries. China and Japan had been at war for a year and a half when the conference convened, but the Chinese and Japanese delegates were there. What brought them together and made their fellowship for fifteen days so sweet and so rewarding? At bottom it was simply that they had all been nurtured on the same great book. Their interpretation of it had made some of them into Quakers, and some into high churchmen; some of them adherents of state churches, and some of them stanch supporters of the free church idea; but their common conception of life was that God rules the affairs of men and nations, and that the prayer of Christ for the coming of the Kingdom required that they should submerge their racial and national differences and their differences of speech and dress and custom, and exalt a common Lord whose power of love alone could blend the life of all men into a common loyalty.

Even where the language barrier has not been pierced, the blending power of the gospel makes brothers out of men. One of the delegates at the Madras Conference tells of this incident on the journey home. A small party had left Aleppo in two cars. About an hour out of the city one of the cars broke down. There seemed nothing to do but for one of the party to drive back into Aleppo for help. And so this man, with the Kurdish driver, started back to the city. After driving some minutes in silence, the passenger asked the driver, "Do you speak English?" The driver shook his head, "No."—"Do you speak French?" Again, "No."—"Do you speak German?" Once more, "No." There was silence for some time, and then the driver took his turn. In his native dialect he inquired of his passenger, "Do you speak Kurdish?"—"No."—"Do you speak Arabic?"—"No."—"Do you speak Turkish?"—"No." Once more there was silence. At length the Kurdish driver began to hum "Nearer, my God, to Thee." His passenger caught up the tune, and he, too, started to hum "Nearer, my God, to Thee." Then the driver started another hymn, and his passenger joined in. Soon

they were singing, each in his own language, one after another of the great hymns of the Christian faith. As they came to the gates of Aleppo, they were singing lustily, "When the roll is called up yonder, we'll be there."

All the unifying influences that made the fellowship at Madras the sweetest and most satisfying thing any of the delegates had ever known, had come from the Bible—the Bible translated into their own tongues or the Bible translated into music or into ceremony or any of those other languages of the heart that instantly tend to make all men one. For some of the delegates the Bible had been available in their tongues for centuries; for others, only decades; but, for all of them, the Bible had been boring through the mountains of language that had separated them, as no piece of their own literature could ever possibly have done, and had brought them on the deepest levels of their thinking to a common view of life in Christ.

And so I want to do honor to the valiant men and women who, through all the Christian centuries, have toiled at the difficult task of translating the Scriptures into the tongues of men. There is no human undertaking that I have ever examined that appears to me to be quite so difficult as this task. Surely, no one not empowered with the passion of Christ for needy fellow humans would ever undertake it. Indeed, this is the simple fact of the case. In the world of trade the practice has been, when dealing with native peoples, to employ what is commonly called "pidgin English," which serves to express enough of the ordinary simple ideas of barter and trade to get the business done, but, of course, is quite incapable of expressing the finer shades of thought or the deep things that stir in every human heart. It is unthinkable that a missionary, with his Christ-given respect for the people to whom he has gone, with his reverence for the message he has brought them, and with his desire to bring them not merely some information but a great transformation, can do anything but listen to the sounds the people make, till he catches the genius of their speech, masters its structure, constructs a grammar, compiles a dictionary, and begins to translate the gospel in their tongue. Along with this,

the missionary must teach the people to read and to write the language he has prepared for them. It is a titanic task.

In the pioneer days of modern missions the obstacles were almost insuperable. One of the first tasks Adoniram Judson undertook when he began his work in Burma in 1814 was to give the Bible to the people of Burma in their own tongue. Something of the enormity of the task may be gleaned from the following sentences taken from one of his early letters:

When we take up a language spoken by a people on the other side of the earth, whose very thoughts run in channels diverse from ours, and whose modes of expression are consequently all new; when we find the letters and words all totally destitute of the least resemblance to any language we have ever met with, and these words not fairly divided, and distinguished, as in Western writing, by breaks, and points, and capitals, but run together in one continuous line, a sentence or paragraph seeming to the eye but one long word; when, instead of clear characters on paper, we find only obscure scratches on dry palm leaves strung together, and called a book; when we have no dictionary and no interpreter to explain a single word, and must get something of the language before we can avail ourselves of the assistance of a native teacher—that means work.

“To learn Chinese,” said one of the colleagues of Robert Morrison who was the first to translate the whole Bible into that language—“to learn Chinese is a work for men with bodies of brass, lungs of steel, heads of oak, hands of spring steel, hearts of apostles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah.” Indeed, in many of the great languages where an early translation has often been the task of one man, eventually the work must become that of a group of scholars.

Thus it came about in the Mandarin, or common speech Bible for the Chinese. A Union version, completed by a committee of translators in 1919, is becoming one of the cornerstones of the future of China. One of the members of this com-

mittee, during the days while the gruelling task was in process, writes with rare humor of the work:—

Now we sit down to our task—ten men including our Chinese teachers. . . . We always begin the session with prayer: it is prayer that saves us. We are trying to settle the text of the Book of Acts. How simple it looks in English! But almost every verse means a battle. . . . A verse is read, and the debate begins: “The style is too low—just what the coolies on the street use.”—“But we want a style that even the coolies can understand. The trouble with our Bibles is that they have been translated for the learned and not for the common people.”—“This phrase is quite impossible in our section: it is a classical phrase with us and would never be understood.”—“I hold that, if Luke had been writing in Chinese, he would have used just this phrase.” . . . So the debate goes on, and the result of the morning’s work is a few verses.

In this time of unprecedented confusion, when one is continually saying to himself, “What will the world be like the rest of my lifetime,” let us remember the Bible—God’s book of truth. It is in the world to stay. It is rooted too deep for any bombs to dislodge. It is Germany’s book and China’s book and the book of hundreds of thousands in India, Burma, Africa, and South America. Wherever English culture has gone, there it will be till the end of time. During the past century and a half this book has passed into practically all the languages of men. It has bored through the mountains of national and racial difference, and helped men to find the common ground of unity in Christ.

God could not have put it into the hearts of missionaries, in these recent years, to undertake this well-nigh impossible task of making the Bible the book of all the peoples as no other book can ever hope to be—no, never could He have put it into their hearts and given them the strength to do this work—all in vain.

When men are weary of war and intrigue and lying and deceit,

they are going to look in other directions for the solution of their problems of living together in the same world. They are going to discover this book possessed by them all, understood by them all, apparently belonging in a very intimate way to them all; and they are going to discover in their Bibles words of guidance like these of Jeremiah:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

And then, some day men and nations are going to resolve that theirs shall be the joy of hastening the fulfillment of another verse they find—each in his own tongue:

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Chapter 14

QUEER PEOPLE

Can you believe it when Jesus says, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you"?

I confess that it has not always been an easy verse for me. Like the man whose afflicted son the disciples had been unable to cure, I have felt as I stood before this verse like saying, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." My study through the years has, however, I am glad to say, helped my unbelief. With the incredible verse in mind I have posed this question to myself: "Have there ever been people who have moved mountains? Who are the people who have altered the life of all mankind more than any others, who have moved mountains of established social custom and of religious error and bigotry, who have leveled the barriers of hatred and suspicion between races and classes, who have devised new bases for the building of national life and international relationship and have erected spiritual structures that appear strong enough to stand all the storms that may arise to threaten them?" I have asked myself, "Have there been any such people?"

My search has brought four groups to the front whose valiant achievements, done through faith, have indeed moved mountains.

The first group is the Hebrew prophets who, in the seventh and eighth centuries before the Christian era, came out with a set of ethical principles which undergird all that we call the best in our Western civilization today. The second group is the apostles who, for the most part Jews, took the ethical principles of the Hebrew prophets and, impelled by the redeeming power of Christ, offered them to all the world. So much beyond mov-

ing mountains seemed the power of these first Christian leaders, that their foes, in dismay, said they were turning the world upside down. The third group was the company of the Reformers who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rediscovered the Bible and by their popular declarations of its promises freed the church from the shackles that had bound her for centuries and opened up all over Europe new paths to Christian conquest. The fourth group were the Puritans who took the Reformers at their word and carried their teachings into the social and political realms with such convincing fervor as to reconstruct the English state and in the persons of our Pilgrim fathers lay the foundations for the free communities in the new world which in time merged into our American republic. Through two and a half millenniums the influence of these four groups of God-conscious, believing, courageous men have, I submit, done more to move mountains than all the military conquerors one can list from Rameses II to Adolf Hitler.

Although these four groups of people lived in widely separated centuries and belonged to different races and were quite unlike in many other important respects, they made the identical impression on their contemporaries—they were alike regarded as queer, unlovely people, were all hated and persecuted. Jesus reminded his generation that their fathers had murdered the prophets. Jesus himself and all his disciples, with a single exception, met violent deaths. Luther and Calvin and Knox and other reformers were held up to scorn, and in some cases put to death for what they said and did, and even today people curl up their lips at the name of Puritan.

Queer people—because they took the clear purposes of a righteous God literally. Queer people because they decided to live by the plain teachings of the Bible. But mighty people, though they were few in number in every group, because they walked by faith in the light of God's unchanging truth.

Our spiritual heritage stems from all these mountain-moving groups but we have time only to linger in our thought upon one—the Puritans. To further sharpen our vision, let us look at our Pilgrim fathers—the most famous of the Puritans. I suppose there was never any group of men in history who were

as cordially despised as the Pilgrim fathers. They originated in the little town of Scrooby in central England. At the beginning of the seventeenth century there lived in this unattractive village a man named William Brewster. He was a graduate of Cambridge University. In Scrooby he held various positions of public trust, including that of postmaster. About the year 1600 William Brewster began inviting a company of men and women to his home every Sunday to worship God. To us this seems innocent enough; but, in the days of Elizabeth and her successor James I, this was a traitorous thing to do; for the court had prescribed the places and the forms of worship—and they were not to be changed.

The Puritan mind can be a very obstinate sort of mind. Just because everybody else did things in a certain way was no reason why the little group in Scrooby should. Even the King, so they said, had no right to dictate to them in certain important matters. James I was not the worst of kings but he couldn't stand what these strange people said so he declared one day, "I will make them conform or I will harry them out of the land." And harry them out of the land he did. What loss would it be to England anyhow when they went? To the people of their own day these first Puritans were exceedingly ordinary. There were none of England's mighty ones among them. Not one of them could boast a pedigree. They possessed no learning, had no political influence and little cash. Indeed they were so poor that it took them several years in Holland to earn enough to take them across the Atlantic.

It was because Holland was near by and was in those days a tolerant nation, that the little band from Scrooby settled there. They found a haven first in Amsterdam and later in Leyden. Here they remained for eleven years before they decided to come to America, where their freedom to worship God and create their own society on Bible patterns would be complete.

And here we ought to pause, and consider what it meant to cross the Atlantic in the year 1620. Someone has said that the proper way to measure an ocean is not with a tape line, but with a clock. Measured that way, the Atlantic Ocean, three hundred and twenty-one years ago, was fifty thousand miles

wide. It took the "Mayflower" nine weeks to make the trip. And when it was made, these Pilgrims found themselves one morning off a bleak coast, on which no other landing party had ever succeeded in getting a foothold.

The story of that first winter in the Plymouth Colony with its loneliness, sickness, hardship, and death is scarcely credible to us. Of the one hundred and two Pilgrims who came over on the "Mayflower," fifty-one—just half their number—died in January or February. Of the twenty-four households, four were completely obliterated, and only four entirely escaped sickness or death. The devotion with which they served one another during those trying months is simply beyond all praise.

Meanwhile the "Mayflower" lay at anchor offshore. On the fifth of April, 1621, twenty-one men, six lads old enough to work, and a little company of women and children stood on the shore and watched the vessel that had brought them hoist her sails and move off toward the horizon. Not a single Pilgrim desired to return. If I were a painter, I should paint that picture. It is one of the great scenes in the history of the world. Because that handful of people whom the rest of the world thought queer, stayed on that shore—you and I are what we are today.

And how do we explain the Pilgrims? They are to be explained in terms of the Bible. England produced no people like the Puritans before, because the English people in the earlier centuries did not have the Bible in their native tongue. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Reformers and the invention of the printing press had given the people the Bible. The book became immensely popular. Some of the people literally devoured it. From their Bible they gained a new conception of God, and a new idea of the dignity of manhood; and they sensed the presence of a great new redemptive power that was within their reach. It is difficult for us to realize, no matter how vivid our imagination, what the Bible meant to the common people of England in the sixteenth century. It was practically the only book in their hands. There were books in the libraries; but the libraries were for rich people and the scholars only. That was before the days of Andrew Carnegie. Imagine a world in which there were no books of fiction, no books of history, no

books of science, no biographies, no books of any sort, no newspapers, no magazines, no religious press, no tracts, none of the thousands of publications that today make the wastepaper business in America a lucrative trade. There was just one book in the home—and that was the Bible. No wonder men's lives began to change. It affected the speech of the people till they talked in Biblical language. They gave their children Biblical names. But, most of all, the book molded their character and their conduct. Of course, it brought on reformation and revolutions. Of course, there was bound to appear somewhere in England a group of people who would demand that a nation be built upon the teachings of the Bible. Of course, such people would be driven out of the land. And, of course, they would seem queer.

Today we are thinking in terms of democracy. In the lurid light of the wars now in progress the common man can discern, if he will, more clearly than ever exactly what democracy is. Democracy is not a form of government. It is a philosophy of government. Democracy may exist under a monarchy, provided the monarchy is a convenience of the will of the people, as it is in England. Or, it can exist under institutions like our own, provided they also are held as a convenience of the people. Democracy is the demand that under whatever form of government every man shall have his rights before God. There is no historic thread easier to trace than that leading directly from Puritanism to democracy.

But Puritanism imparted to democracy something more than a philosophy. It imparted also a certain rash courage that brooked no thought of defeat. The late Dr. Charles E. Jefferson used to say that Puritanism took hold of the world with such a firm grip, that the marks of its hands will never disappear. How similar is a modern philosopher's description of democracy. He says, "The foundation of democracy is the sense of spiritual independence which nerves the individual to stand alone against the powers of the world." The children of such a spirit, whether you call it Puritanism or democracy, are the free church, the free school, the free press, freedom of assembly—the best ele-

ments in the best conception of government men have yet discovered.

The titanic struggle of the present hour is the struggle to dislodge from its throne in the hearts of men this philosophy of freedom and in its place reinstate the ancient orders of savage slavery whose mountains of darkness, misery, hopelessness, and horror were first challenged by the Hebrew prophets. These queer Hebrew prophets began to move the mountains that separated men from their just heritage under God. The twelve apostles, queer fellows, who said they were following a man who had risen from the dead, nevertheless started a movement that in less than three hundred years had overcome the Roman Empire. The Reformers, queer fanatics, who read their Bibles in unorthodox ways, remade the map of Europe. The Puritans, impossible cranks, gave sovereignty to the people where it had always belonged, and found in the Bible all they needed to construct the state, the school, the home, and the church. Queer people—who move mountains!

Behind our American way of life are these queer people. Just to contemplate them stirs my faith to action. Does it not yours?

Chapter 15

BLESSED BOOK AGENTS

May I begin by reminding you that here, in the United States, the Bible is about the most accessible book there is. Every bookstore carries Bibles. The chain stores and the drug-stores carry them and now recently they have appeared on the newsstands. But, that is not true everywhere. Most of the people of the world as yet do not even know that there is such a book.

Outside of Great Britain, the British dominions, western Europe, the United States, and a half dozen cosmopolitan port cities, one cannot drop into any kind of store at all and get a Bible at any price. This is true of all of Asia, all of Africa, much of Europe, all of Latin America, and the islands of the seas. Figured on a population basis, it appears that there are about two thirds of the people of the world who are completely out of reach of the Bible. If, then, the Bible contains the positive answer to the world's despair, how is the despairing world ever going to get its answer?

It is about the men who take the Bible to the people without it, that I want to speak today. I am calling them blessed book agents. Book agents, I am told, are not the most popular people in the world; nor are these Bible men always popular. But, because they do carry to unenlightened fellow humans the book that speaks the answer to the world's despair, they have every right to the adjective "blessed." These men are often called colporteurs, which means one who carries his load on his neck. However the word came to be used, I do not know; but I do know that the important point about these men is that they carry the book in their hearts. They are not salesmen for they have no thought of profit to themselves. They always sell their books at cost or less—often give them away. Rather, they are evangelists. They work for the glory of God. Blessed book agents!

There are wide areas of the world where no missionary work is being done. There are others where once flourishing missions have closed their doors. We are facing a situation now in some parts of the world where, because of the wars and the shifting of sovereignties, many mission stations, if not whole fields, are being closed.

In many such situations the colporteur may still go his way from city to city, village to village, door to door. He is quite different from an established mission station. He tells the story of Jesus and his love, and is gone; but, in countless places, the book he leaves stays on. How many individual lives are sweetened and blessed by these books only heaven knows. Scores of little groups are meeting in many lands today to read God's Word and worship Him together in places where no missionary establishment has ever sunk its roots, but where the little book left by the colporteur has continued to give its silent message and to transform lives and homes and whole communities.

Let us follow the trail of these blessed book agents as they mingle with the crowds in the market places, and move out into the untraveled bypaths where the name of Jesus has never been heard.

Colporteur Teofilo Castro works in Peru. He carries along with his books a heavy burden for souls. He will not let others forget God and eternity. In many places he is dragged before the police and threatened with imprisonment, but he never runs away.

Once, while he was offering his books, the police interfered and took him to the police station. The officer in charge began to bawl at him. He took it calmly, however, and suggested to the officer that he calm down also, adding that he was not deaf. The official, rather taken aback, ordered him to sit down and wait. "Oh, no!" said Castro; "you can deal with me at once; for the day is passing, and souls are being lost, and my Master is waiting."—"Who is your master?" the officer demanded.—"Ah," replied Castro, "unfortunately, you do not know him. He is Our Lord Jesus Christ." Castro was then dismissed and told that he was free to go on selling. Then and there, in the

doorway of the police station, he sold books to some who had been listening.

A colporteur, writing of his work in Upper Egypt, tells how he was taken to task on a train by a policeman. He says:

I left my books on the seat beside some other passengers, and accompanied the officer to an empty compartment to discuss the matter of my peddling illegally. I asked him his name, and he answered, "Peter."—

"Then you must be a Christian," I exclaimed, "though I never took you for one who had any connection with Christianity."—

"What does Christ mean?" asked the policeman. "Doesn't it mean one of the prophets?"

Then I began to explain to him about salvation, and the labor of distributing Scriptures to open the eyes of the blind. "And you, too, are blind!" I said; "for you know nothing about our Saviour but the word prophet!"

"Forgive me, brother," he replied, "for not knowing anything about all this."

"I forgive you," I said, "and pray that God will forgive you all the years you have wasted in ignorance."—

"It is because nobody has ever spoken to me of these things," he rejoined, "that the Lord has sent you."—and he took out his handkerchief and wiped away the tears that were filling his eyes.

A policeman in tears! Then I taught him how to pray.

When we returned to my place in the coach, I did not find the books I had left there; but I found a man who handed me the price of them. As he did, he said, "When you went off with the officer, we distributed them for you."

There is no country on earth where more of these blessed book agents are at work than in vast, suffering, aspiring China. I must tell you about Colporteur Ko, who works in Shansi Province, in what may be termed "no man's land." When he visits territory occupied by the Japanese, he has to carry a pass which Japanese troops will honor. On one occasion, however,

he was set upon by Chinese guerrillas, who took away his Japanese pass. On returning home, a Japanese soldier demanded his identification card, and, of course, he did not have it, and though he explained who he was and showed his Bible society certificate, he was accused of being a spy. He exhibited his Gospels and his arm band, but these were of no avail—he was a spy and must be killed. When he was kneeling before the soldier, who was already preparing his rifle, another Japanese soldier chanced to pass by, and he crossed over to see what was happening.

"No, no, this is a mistake," he said to his fellow soldier; "I know this man—he is a preacher, a seller of books, and only a few days ago he invited me into his house to drink tea. You cannot shoot this man."

And thus Colporteur Ko was rescued. It reminds one of the words of Jesus—"A cup of cold water"—in this incident it was a cup of hot tea—"shall in nowise lose its reward."

Some of the best work the Bible men have done has been in Japan in these war years. In 1938 there were twenty men working in the northern islands of the empire. Together they traveled a total of 43,000 miles, and together they sold 490,000 books in the year!

One of these workers was permitted to enter a soldiers' hospital.

A soldier said to him, "We are so glad you came. We are fed up with entertainment of various sorts. When the programs are over, we are more weary than ever. While funny and amusing for the time, they leave in our hearts nothing of assurance and comfort. Absolute restful joy is what we crave." The colporteur found these soldiers eager to have the little Gospel portions handed them. Of all the literature supplied at their bedsides nothing is read like the Word of God—so the nurses report.

Let me close with a story from poor, desperate, bleeding Europe. It was recorded in a recent report of a veteran colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society in unoccupied France. Sitting on a public bench under the burning sun, Colporteur Charvet saw a young man with his face buried in his hands. Entering into conversation with him, the colporteur

finally offered him a New Testament. "I don't want it," was the reply. "I used to have one, but it was too big to carry, and I threw it into the water." The colporteur felt by intuition that this was not the real reason why he had thrown the book away. After a little more conversation and a few tactful questions, the young man opened up his heart and told the colporteur his story:

Several months ago I left my parents, and went to the town to live my own life in my own way. But things did not go as I expected. My hope and my money gradually disappeared. Now I have nothing left. I intended to return home,—that is my home there, the white house you see in the valley,—but having got so far, I am ashamed to go any further. I am afraid too; for, if my parents should refuse to forgive me, there would be nothing left but death.

At this confession, there was only one thing for Colporteur Charvet to do. He opened his New Testament and read the parable of the prodigal son. The young man saw its application to himself, and broke down. Suddenly M. Charvet conceived a great idea. Telling the prodigal to remain where he was, he went to the house in the valley that had been pointed out to him. Knocking at the door, he offered the New Testament to the old man who responded. He opened it, and was soon joined by his wife. Asked what sort of a book it was, M. Charvet read them the same passage.

The father was moved to the depths of his being by the powerful story which has, in the course of the centuries, brought tears to so many eyes, and redemption to so many ill-spent lives. Then he opened his heart and told the colporteur his story.

"We had a son once, and he was everything to us," he said. "Unfortunately, we did not get along well together, and he went away. We have heard nothing from him since. We would gladly forgive him if he would return; but we do not know where to find him."

Then Charvet told them everything. "I know where your son is to be found," he began. "He is quite near here, humble

and repentant, and has sent me to ask your forgiveness. He wants but a word from you to return home."

A few moments later the overjoyed mother was weeping on her son's neck, and the father, after kissing him on both cheeks, was shaking his hand. Then they all gave thanks to God for His goodness, and gladly bought a Testament in which they could read together of the reconciled life in Christ.

Wherever it is taken, the Bible is the answer to the despair that mounts, these days, in the hearts of the men and women of every country in the world. Wherever it is taken! I commend, then, to your prayers these blessed book agents. Unsung heroes, they are, striving for a better world—like the apostles of old, they care naught for themselves if only someone who has never heard of God's unspeakable gift of Christ to him may hear of it and possess for himself a copy of the book that answers the deep yearnings of his heart.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet
of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth
peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that
publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy
God reigneth!

Chapter 16

BRIGHT SPOTS IN THE PACIFIC

How thankful we should all be that America still lives in the light! When British refugee children are landed here at New York at evening time, they are transported with delight at the fairy crystal brilliance of a city that has not known a blackout for over twenty years.

In the midst of this fairyland of lights there is seen on the floor of the Bible House, headquarters of the American Bible Society, as one enters from Park Avenue, a large globe more than four feet in diameter. As it revolves on its axis, it sparkles with tiny illuminated beads of glass. Each bead indicates a language in which the whole Bible has been translated; and the beads are located where each language is spoken.

To one who makes a little study of this globe, one of the most interesting discoveries is that fifteen or twenty of these sparkling beads are scattered over the islands of the Pacific.

How much do we Americans know about the Pacific? Students of world affairs tell us that we shall soon be a nation that faces west toward an old, old world that is rapidly becoming a new unfolding world, instead of east, as we have always done, toward a world that is decadent. However that may be, it behooves every wide-awake American to post himself these days on what is happening in the Pacific.

Little was known about the southern Pacific waters until the voyage of Captain Cook about the time of our Revolutionary War. One of the first islands he touched was Tahiti, which is the better known to us because it figures in the fascinating story of *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

• Tahiti holds a high place in the story of the Bible's triumphant march around the world; for it was on this little island that the first Bible for the savages of the South Seas made its appear-

ance. The hero of the story is a bricklayer, named Henry Nott. He was one of the group of missionaries who went out to the South Seas from England in 1797—the first to carry Protestant missions to that part of the world.

I called them savages. The word is none too strong. It is hard to overestimate how low the Tahitians had sunk in their scale of living when the missionaries landed among them. They had a religion, but it expressed itself in the most loathsome ceremonies. They practiced human sacrifice, infanticide, and cannibalism, and were constantly engaged in tribal wars, which were decimating the population. All this had a past of no one knows how many centuries. The natives were steeped in barbarism. Geographically and morally, the island of Tahiti was surely one of the uttermost parts of the earth. To think of establishing Christ there, was nothing less than what the Christian people of England called it a century and a half ago—"the grand experiment."

The first twelve years of residence in Tahiti for Henry Nott and his colleagues record a heroism seldom displayed in Christian history. The wrongs and indignities inflicted on them by the natives were constant and unspeakable; but all the time Henry Nott was studying the language of the people.

About 1809 the light began to break, and one of the most heartening stories in the annals of our faith was written. A system of idolatry—the growth of unnumbered centuries, as foul, as cruel, and as complete as any the Christian faith has ever faced—was swept away with a rapidity and a completeness which utterly confounded the adversaries of Christianity, and imparted to the whole cause of Christ an impulse that was felt around the world. The "grand experiment" had become a glorious achievement!

Amid those dark twelve years Henry Nott had been busy reducing the language of the Tahitians to writing, and had prepared a spelling book. The Gospel of St. Luke was the first portion of the Scriptures given to the people. It, too, had been translated by Mr. Nott, who later sent to England for books that would help him to a fuller understanding of Hebrew and Greek, and who gave himself unsparingly to his task until it was done.

It was in September, 1840, just about a century ago, that Mr. Nott returned to Tahiti from England with the first consignment of three thousand complete Tahitian Bibles. For years thereafter, it was impossible to keep the supply of Bibles equal to the demand; and, to the glory of the Tahitians, let it be said that the entire cost of these early editions was refunded by the natives. Tahiti is a bright spot in the Pacific—not a flash in the pan, but a miniature Christian community, whose influence has now for more than a century been immeasurable in the evangelization of the island world of the South Pacific.

The thrilling story of Pitcairn Island will always be associated in our minds with Tahiti. It is the story of a Bible—a Bible, by the way, that any visitor to New York City may see who will take the time to look for it among the exhibits in the city's public library.

The story begins with the landing on this uninhabited island of nine Englishmen each with a native wife stolen from the Island of Tahiti and six native men to act as servants. It was human society in its most depraved form. Like wild animals they were soon at one another's throats till only two of the Englishmen, nine women, and several small children remained alive.

Alexander Smith, one of the two Englishmen, assumed the care of the helpless widows and their families. With the memory of their dreadful deeds of carnage and in the solitude and tranquillity that followed, Alexander Smith remembered the little Bible that had been salvaged from the ship which he and his fellow mutineers had wrested from its officers and used to construct their settlement on Pitcairn Island. Smith was able to read and in the latter part of his life he acquired the art of writing. With these accomplishments, meager though they were, he drew up after long study of his Bible a code of laws and a system of religious teachings with which he was able to train the children of this forlorn little settlement in the truth that makes men free. Alexander Smith lived till his seventieth year and before he died he saw the residents of Pitcairn Island, forty years after they had first settled there, now numbering seventy-nine, living in accordance with the highest standards of mutual trust, forbearance, benevolence, and moral order.

They had had but one book, but one copy of that book, and but one man, and he almost illiterate, to interpret it to them. But that book had worked the miracle it always does when it is seriously read and obediently followed. It had broken the shackles of sin that so easily beset the human soul and introduced the liberated spirit to its God. Next it had opened the eyes of the redeemed man to the priceless value of his neighbor—and this is the basis of a free society. And most of all, it had introduced men to God and presented them with the unspeakable gift of comradeship with Jesus Christ.

If what I have said so far interests you, get out your map, and see if you can find the Gilbert Islands. Here there lived in 1857 about thirty thousand cannibals. In that year there appeared in the lagoon of one of these coral reefs a little vessel of one hundred and fifty-six tons displacement. On it were Hiram and Minerva Bingham from New England, and materials for the building of a simple home for them to live in. They were the first white people ever to visit these reefs. They had come to bring Christ to the people there. More as objects of curiosity than anything else, the Binghams were received kindly. They built their house, and, after months of patient listening and asking questions, they learned the language of the people and reduced it to writing. Hiram Bingham's father had been the translator of the Scriptures into the Hawaiian tongue, so the son knew something of the trials and pitfalls to be encountered. When he and Minerva had completed the first twelve chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, there was an opportunity to send the manuscript to Honolulu for printing on the little mission press there. When, later, the rest of the Gospel was ready and the manuscript sent to Honolulu, it was returned by the overbusy printers there, who sent along with it for the Binghams a small printing press with type, ink, and paper. But Hiram and Minerva Bingham were not the practical sort of people who could put a printing press together and make it work. Neither could any of their devoted native helpers. They were all filled with dismay. Then, one day, a small boat with four men in it appeared in the lagoon. The men proved to be shipwrecked sailors. One of them named Hotchkiss was a printer! He put the press together, taught

Hiram and his helpers how to use it, and remained for some time to assist them. Thus were the Scriptures first given to the Gilbertese in their own tongue. Today the people of the Gilbert Islands are professing Christians. Their heathen rites are all forgotten. They form a self-sustaining British colony. Two ships a year put in at their little port. The demand for Bibles is constant. The books are now ordered by radio, saving six months in the delivery.

There are sixteen tiny coral atolls in the Gilbert group. The Bible has now for eighty years made them bright spots in the Pacific.

At the close of the first World War there was ceded to Japan a group of 2,550 islands commonly known together as Micronesia. They had formerly been under German rule. The largest island of that part of Micronesia that is called the Caroline group, is Ponape. Missionaries first went there about seventy years ago. Back in the sixties, these pioneers of the Kingdom reduced the language of the Ponapeans to writing, and began to translate the New Testament. Later, some books of the Old Testament were added. In the nineties Germany took over the islands, and developed a strong mission there. The mastery of the language soon reached such a stage, that a complete revision of the New Testament had to be made. This work was in process when the first World War broke. When that happened, Japan's warships immediately sallied forth and occupied the whole of the Micronesia whose islands cover a sea area almost equal to that of the United States, and whose land area is about two thirds that of the tiny state of Rhode Island.

With Japan in charge, Japanese missionaries took up the work just as the revised New Testament, to which was added the Book of Psalms, was ready for the publishing. So here is what happened. Follow me closely. The translation work of the revised New Testament had been done by Germans, and the publishing of the new book was financed by the American Bible Society, which had done all the publishing in this language from the start. For purposes of economy, the books were actually printed in England. When the new volumes reached Ponape, they were distributed by the Japanese Christian missionaries to the Pona-

pesian people. Five nations collaborated to produce this book, which, like no other book, is rapidly becoming the book of all nations. The island of Ponape is to me, on this account, the brightest spot in the Pacific. There is in its gleam a prophecy of that day when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"—of that day when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Chapter 17

"THE BOOKS ARE HERE"

Besides the bright spots in the Pacific of which we have just been thinking, the war is making us conscious of other spots on the six continents that we never heard of before. Recent dispatches have mentioned as a possible air base for the British a little seaport town on the west coast of Africa. It is the city of Douala at the mouth of the Wouri River,—just above the equator where the African coast turns due west. It has recently become the capital city of the Cameroun under the Free French.

On the dock of this busy little port one day in the early weeks of 1941 tumbled ten boxes of books from New York. After passing the customs they were shipped by rail to the interior city of Ezeka, and thence by truck still farther inland to Ebolowa. Here let the story be taken up by Dr. A. I. Good of the Elat Station of the Presbyterian Mission at Ebolowa where he serves the 600,000 Bulu people who inhabit that region. Dr. Good writes under date of March 15, 1941, to Dr. Eric M. North, of the American Bible Society in New York:

I was at the church office when the truck pulled up in front of the door, and the word went around at once, the "Books" have come. There was no need to say what books, there was but one kind of books in which everyone was interested.

Of the one thousand Bibles sent to the Mission, Elat's share was three hundred copies, as Elat is the largest station of the Mission. But what was three hundred copies in such a place as this? Evangelists and teachers alone dependent on Elat Station number about four hundred. The Frank James Industrial School has one hundred and twenty-five apprentices,

the Press fifteen, the Central Hospital forty, not to speak of church elders, Christians in large numbers, five hundred school-boys and one hundred and fifty school-girls.

So we went into a huddle with our fellow-missionaries. It was decided to allow fifty for the Industrial School, twenty for the Press, twenty-five for the Hospital, twelve for the missionaries, twenty for French teachers, forty for Christians in general and the rest for evangelists, ministers, and teachers. We assigned Bibles to eight native ministers, five licentiates, about twenty inspectors, and are sending out the rest in the proportion of about one for every three evangelists and teachers. A communion-point which is a center for eight preaching-points gets four books. A large town where I held communion a couple of weeks ago with thirteen hundred persons present gets as its share two books.

I have spent a large part of my time the last two days explaining over and over that only a few books came, that they were all assigned already, that there were no more to be had, that we hoped more would be coming before long. Of ten or twelve interpreters, scribes, etc., employed in the government offices nearby, three sent their money for Bibles, and the others were ready to do so, and I could allow the whole lot of them one book. The largest government headman or chief in the district, though a heathen, sent his money, and I let him have a Bible.

Though there is so much disappointment that so many cannot secure copies of the Bible, the joy on the faces of those who receive them is a sight worth seeing. One of our leading evangelists, on receiving his copy from my hands, said as he lovingly fingered over the book, "I'll not open it until I pray." He went away with it unopened in his hands, as he would not open it until he had reached his house and offered a prayer of thanksgiving.

For months I have heard from time to time the expression, "I hope I will not die till the Bible comes." As one passed along the street yesterday and today, a word was constantly being heard, the word "Kalate," the "Book." It was on everyone's tongue. Here and there under the eaves of a house could

be seen a group gathered about something, and one knew that there was a Bible in the hands of some fortunate one.

Not a copy has been sold in public. All were assigned to those who were most worthy, and who would make the best use of them. In the Industrial School, the committee of three who made out the list of the worthy was told not to assign a book to two men in the same village, but to see that books got into as many villages as possible. The whole one thousand copies could easily have been sold here at Elat Station alone, so great is the desire for the Bible in Bulu. Need I say to you that whenever more Bibles can be sent out, please send them. Perhaps what I have thus far written will plead for our Bulu people better than anything else.

All the way down through the Christian centuries, beginning possibly with Ulfilas, the Apostle to the Goths in the fourth century, has been a succession of men who have had the exquisite experience which Dr. Good describes in his letter. It is that of beholding a people rescued from heathenism, coming into possession for the first time of the Bible in their own tongue. Some idea of how many times this has happened may be gleaned from the fact that the Bulu language is the one hundred and eighty-fourth into which the whole Bible has been translated and published. This thrill of hope and achievement, however, has occurred far oftener than one hundred and eighty-four times for there are two hundred and twenty-seven more languages into which the New Testament has been translated and there are another six hundred and forty languages into which at least a book of the Bible or some substantial body of selections have been distributed in the native tongue. One of the most reassuring and fascinating volumes that could be written in the field of missionary history would be one bringing together these incidents—when a people first became possessed in printed form of God's Word in the language of their own heart and home.

In every case such a story is the climax of a long tale of patient, persistent labor on the part of missionaries who must mingle with their people long enough to catch the genius of

their speech, master its structure, compile a dictionary, and teach the people themselves to read and write their own language. Behind the fulfillment of Dr. Good's dreams as related in his letter lie not only years of toil but many anxious moments caused by the hazards of war. Briefly stated, it is this: About fifty years ago Reverend A. C. Good, the father of the translator of the Old Testament, settled among the Bulu people. With some knowledge of two related languages, he began to ask the Bulus questions that should open the door to their strange tongue. He made rapid progress but death took him as his work of actual translation had just begun. In 1896, however, two years after he had gone, his translation of the four Gospels was published by the American Bible Society. Thirty years later the complete New Testament appeared. Meanwhile Dr. A. I. Good, his son, had begun the colossal task of translating the Old Testament.

I was at the Bible House one day in April, 1937, when Dr. and Mrs. E. Coe Love, missionary colleagues of Dr. Good's, arrived with the completed manuscript of the Old Testament. I have seldom felt nearer to the presence of God than I did as the bearers of this priceless parcel rehearsed to me something of the labors that had gone into the completion of the huge manuscript. Later, Dr. Good himself wrote in some detail of the problems with which he had wrestled through the years. Primarily it was the question which every translator working among backward races encounters, the problem of rendering "the wide vocabulary and profound concepts of a civilized language into the limited range of words and ideas of primitive man."

Writes Dr. Good,

The most difficult place in the entire Old Testament to translate in Bulu proved to be the passage describing the bases for the lavers in Solomon's temple in I Kings 7:27-37. . . . Imagine a savage African from his language furnishing equivalents for the following words, the very ideas of which are non-existent to him either in fact or fancy: bases, panels, pedestal, wreaths of hanging work, undersetters, capital, foursquare, axle-trees, felloes, naves, casting. It took three full days to translate these ten verses; yet somehow equivalents were found

in the Bulu language. . . . After all, there is always some way, and an intelligible way, to convey truth. One of the marvels of translation is that, in regard to spiritual truth no matter how profound, we have always found a way to express it. With careful search, a good native helper, a knowledge of the language, and the use of judgment in selection, no essential truth need be lost to the native mind. . . .

Of the task as a whole, Dr. Good says,

In all probability, with the original handwriting of the translation at my desk, and the various recopyings that have been made through the years, owing to corrections made, it is safe to estimate that the entire Old Testament has been written over three or four times. . . .

If time is thus required for the mere copying, what shall we say about the time required for the original translation? Twenty-three years have passed from beginning to conclusion of this task. During the first years, work was done on it sporadically as opportunity offered, but, for the last fifteen years, it has been always with us. During these years, there has always been full missionary work to carry on, teaching in schools, the care of churches, and supervision work, so that this by no means represents continuous time spent on translation. Only for about one year was the translator comparatively free for this specific task, so great is the pressure of work on the mission field.

After months of further patient toil in reading and correcting printers' proofs, the Old Testament, together with the New, which the Bulus had learned to love in the fifteen years they had had it, was printed for the American Bible Society in a little English town near London. Meanwhile the war broke over England and no industry was safe. Five thousand sets of pages of the precious Bible were run off and one thousand sewed, bound, and shipped without trouble from the enemy's bombs. In peace times the books would, of course, have been sent direct to West Africa. The relative proximity to the mission field had been one of the principal reasons for doing the printing in

England. To insure a safer journey, however, it was decided that the books should go by way of New York. For a few weeks the ten cartons containing the Bulu Bibles were at the Bible House in New York. In January they left on their hazardous journey that brought them safely into the little harbor of Douala.

As these lines are written another thousand copies of the Bulu Bible are on the way to the field. And in a score of unheard-of places, in Guatemala, in Peru, in the Philippines, in India, on the islands of the sea, overburdened missionaries, with many other pressing duties always upon them, are finding the time and strength to translate into still other tongues, as yet possessed of no books at all, at least some small portion of God's Word which some happy day will be published and delivered to the little company of believers who will in their turn shout in whatever ecstatic sound their language knows the equivalent of the Bulu "Kalate" or the English "The books have come."

Chapter 18

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE BIBLE

There are hosts of people who say they believe in the Bible, own a Bible, and read it occasionally; but there are precious few people who really love their Bibles. I know that many of them regret this. Am I putting the figure too low, when I estimate that not more than 10 per cent of the people of every church have really fallen in love with the Bible? How large is your church?—one hundred people? Are there ten of its members to whom the Bible is an indispensable friend—who might say with the Psalmist, “O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” Are you one of them?

Well, however that may be, I want to have you consider with me today how these real Bible lovers came to fall in love with the book. For they have something that every believer in Christ needs, and which few possess.

Let us be just as practical and realistic as we can. Nobody ever falls in love with anybody else, unless that person is at least interesting to him. How then are we going to find the Bible interesting? How is reading the Bible to become one of those experiences that so thoroughly engage the attention and excite the curiosity or the emotions, that the sense of the passing of time is erased? There are such things in every normal life. The list includes love stories and tales of adventure, moving pictures, athletic events, an hour spent with a vivid, radiant personality.

The things in which a person is interested become his “interests.” Some of these interests are instinctive. Love between a man and woman is instinctive. So are family love and love between friends. Love of freedom is instinctive. That explains why dear old Britain is willing to see London, Coventry, and Bristol reduced to ashes, if need be, that she may preserve her liberties. Other interests are of the sort that, although to a degree rooted

in instinct, must be cultivated. A cultured person is one who has deliberately cultivated certain interests that have enriched his whole existence. The really happy people in the world are those who have cultivated some interest until they have fallen in love with it—an interest in a garden, or a cote of carrier pigeons, or symphonic music or astronomy or Shakespeare or amateur radio. These are the really happy people; but, mark you, they have in every case had to put in some hard work to develop their interest. Their lives have been very different from the lives of that countless company of restless, unhappy, clock-watching Americans, who grudgingly go about their daily work, and spend the rest of their time leaning their minds up against daily papers, picture magazines, and other forms of entertainment that are all right in small doses, like spice, but are disastrous if taken as life's principal mental and spiritual food.

How then shall we make the Bible interesting? We need guidance here; for the Bible is really a shelf of books, and there are some of them that arouse interest at the start, and others in which the ordinary busy American could not be expected to develop an interest without study.

What first interests a man in carrier pigeons? Is it not the completely amateurish curiosity in the fact that these birds have a homing instinct that is infallible to an incredible degree, and he wants to investigate its mystery? At first he has no conception of the scientific factors in the business on which, however, he may a few years later become an authority.

Where, then, does an absorbing devotion to the Bible begin? It naturally begins with an amateurish interest in the fact that there lived in this world, sixty generations ago, a Jewish carpenter who so stirred the hearts of a dozen ordinary men with whom he associated for only a few months, that those men, under the spell of his personality, literally overturned the world, opening a whole new chapter in history, and literally plowing the name of their friend and leader into the life of the world, until today's wars are being fought over principles announced nineteen centuries ago by this man, and new life is being carried in his name to vast sections of the race in India, China, and elsewhere, where his influence appears to be as revolutionary in the twentieth

century as it proved to be in the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries, and in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Any honest mind that does not "prick up its ears" at the announcement of such a fact as that is dull indeed. The normal reaction ought to be: "What did you say about this Jesus?—that he never left any formal body of teaching, yet more learned books about what he said have been written in more languages and over a longer span of centuries, than have been written on the teachings of any philosopher who ever lived? Tell me, where is the original record of this man's life?"

Right here we offer the Bible, but we do not suggest that our inquirer start at the opening page of the book. No; we tell him to read the Book of Mark. When we say book, he may break in with the complaint, "I haven't time to read a book. Isn't there a pamphlet on it?" And we can honestly answer, "Yes—call it the pamphlet of Mark." It isn't as long as many of the magazine stories we read regularly. It is the simplest sort of a narrative, abounding in short, uninvolved sentences that carry one at almost breathless speed through the life story of the most fascinating, lovable man who ever lived.

One of the fortunate things about the arrangement of the Gospels is that Mark is followed immediately by Luke. If an honest seeker after a deeper interest in the Bible reads Mark, he will want to go right on. And that is just what he should do. Luke's Gospel has been called the most beautiful book ever written. The reader will not go far before he finds himself immersed in the Christmas story that he has heard and seen pictured all his life. Then he will find the narrative rehearsing, yet in a fuller and more sympathetic way, the same story he read in Mark. Mark was rather sketchy. If the reader is really interested, he is hungry for more details. He finds them in Luke, including the most beautiful short story ever written, containing two hundred and eighteen words, of which one hundred and forty-nine are of one syllable, about a boy who wheedled his inheritance out of his father, went off and spent it disastrously, and finally, when the whole world had turned against him and he was sick and starving, came home to find his father watching

for him, and ready to forgive him and give him another start. If a person has caught on when he read Mark, he'll read Luke through to the end.

And if interest in Luke holds out at all, our reader, when he finishes, will have the feeling that he has read only the first installment of a serial story. And so it is. When the person who is cultivating an abiding love for the Bible finishes Luke, I advise him to skip John for the time being, and read the Book of Acts. You know Luke wrote Acts as well as the Gospel that bears his name. At the opening of the Acts, he refers to his Gospel as being a treatise on what Jesus "began both to do and to teach." The Book of Acts is the rest of the story, about what the risen Christ continued to do and to teach—and really, friends, when you start the Acts on top of Luke's Gospel—well, if you don't go on and consume the midnight "mazda" till the little book is finished, there is something missing in your mental and emotional balance.

Having gone this far, a normal person will be asking, "What else is there to know about this Jesus that is called the Christ?" If he is willing to admit it, what the reader really wants now is to have Jesus talk directly to him. Exactly this is the time to read the Gospel of John. It is the personal Gospel. It has just enough narrative in it to satisfy the lingering desire for more of the story of Jesus; but it abounds in reports of precisely what He said, and if you abandon yourself to its impact, you will find that, by the time you get to the fourteenth chapter, it will be Jesus saying to you: "Let not your heart be troubled . . . believe . . . in me"; and it will not be Philip so much as you to whom he is saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and a great surge of joy will enter your soul, because you have always wanted to be sure of God, but couldn't until now you really laid hold of God in Christ. Then you begin to ask yourself, "How can I remain on this new high level to which I have been lifted?"—and you read on a few verses more, and you can't believe your eyes when these words greet them—"If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, keep my commandments."

The chances are that by this time you will have fallen on your

knees. Something for sheer emotional upheaval, not unlike what happened when you fell in love, has happened to you again.

And the Bible? I don't fear now about the place of the Bible in your life. You will devour the remaining Gospel—Matthew—eagerly. You will want to know what Jesus read to nurture his glorious soul. So you will turn to the stories of the Creation, and the story of Abraham and Jacob and Joseph, and the record of that great nation builder—Moses. You will read the books of the history of Jesus' nation—all about David and Solomon and the kings that succeeded them. Whether you have ever read poetry or not, you will make the Psalms one of the books to which you turn constantly; for they were the hymns Jesus sang. You will read the prophets at whose fountain of godly wisdom Jesus drew so constantly. And, of course, you will read all the rest of the New Testament. You will feel the throb of a great soul filled with the spirit of Christ in each of Paul's letters as you read them. The Book of Revelation will express exactly how you feel that in Christ you have found one whom nothing can ultimately defeat; that it is no wonder the Bible is more alive today than any other book; no wonder it appeals to the human heart no matter in what language it is read; no wonder people are willing to lose themselves in the jungles of Africa to give it to benighted fellow humans. Yes, everybody ought to feel the way the writer of the Book of Revelation felt, that it cannot be otherwise, "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."

And, behold, you have fallen in love with the Bible.

